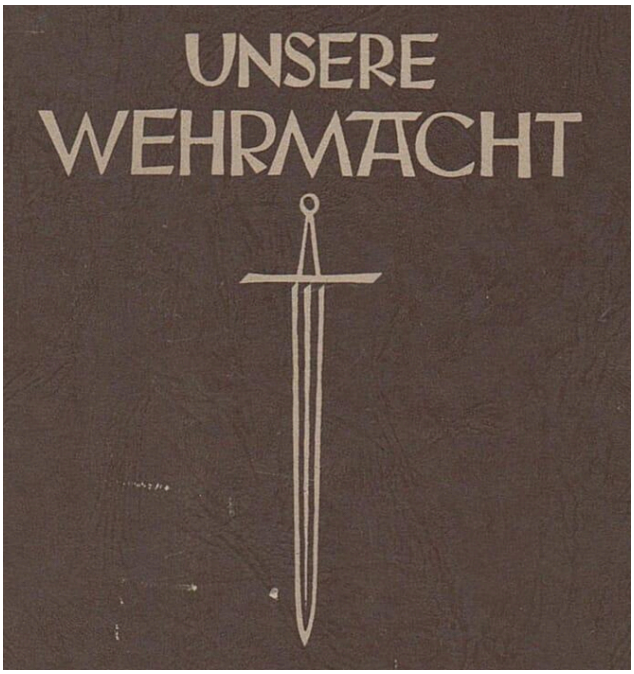
Our Armed Forces at War:
Color Photographs from the Propaganda Companies



Verlaghaus Bong - Berlin
1941

This book was written during the early months of the Eastern Campaign, when German soldiers, in a titanic struggle, defeated the deadly threat of Bolshevism that had endangered the Reich and Europe; it was published by the publisher in agreement with the High Command of the Wehrmacht.
Paul Friedrich Höhne was responsible for the publication, while the text and captions were written by Carl Albert Drewitz.

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On the Essence of German Soldierhood

Anyone who, in these weeks of momentous historical decisions on the battlefields of Russia, undertakes to write about the German army and the German soldier, owes an explanation not only to the reader, but also to himself, for in such times there is rightly strong skepticism towards paper, ink, and print - after all, what can words really amount to in times when only action counts?
A book must therefore truly have something to say if it is to prove its worth, and this book attempts to meet this demand through both images and text - these are the thoughts that accompanied its creation.

Every day, we are all witnesses to a unique event; the homeland reads and hears of the tremendous achievements at the front with fervent hearts, and once a day, the report from the High Command of the Wehrmacht speaks to the German people and to the world in its sober language.
It has been etched into our consciousness like letters carved in stone by a master's hand, and anyone with the heart and sensitivity to see the greatness in history is moved anew each day by the force of the facts - this war, which National Socialist Germany is waging for its very existence, has become a chain of the boldest undertakings, surprising events, and unforeseen turns of events.
This war has proven to be the great revaluer of all values and concepts, and it has overturned all prophecies, dashing the hopes of the Reich's enemies yet far exceeded our own expectations - through all these changes, only one thing has remained true to itself: the German Wehrmacht! It is what it has always been and remains—unrivaled!
Thus, no book, no word, and no image can add to the glory that the German soldier has earned in a thousand battles, just as the enemy cannot tarnish the honor of this German soldier with all its lies - we are aware of this; a book can therefore only serve to condense and reflect, within a limited space, like a lens, the essence of this soldierly spirit, which in modern warfare splits into many details and is experienced and observed in a multitude of individual forms: to do so is the purpose of this book.
These images were taken by soldiers of the propaganda companies—men who stood at the front just as their comrades did with their weapons.
These are images that simply seek to tell a story; they eschew cheap effects, and they aim to inspire reflection and to piece together the whole from the parts.
Image and text are conceived as a unity, and should be received as such - may they reveal the essence of the enduring German soldierly spirit, which we also attempt to describe in words in the following pages.

The campaigns of this war have once again proven that the German soldier is without equal, after the First World War had already established this knowledge so firmly that it could even survive the times of shameful humiliation as a treasured legacy in the hearts of the German people - in essence, however, the German soldiery of our day differs from that of the past, for it is just as inconceivable today without the glorious tradition of the Prussian-German army as it is unimaginable without the National Socialist Revolution.
The bearer of this soldierly spirit is always the German man, who possesses the highest prerequisites in character and education to be the best soldier in this war of motorized armies; above all stands, finally, a leadership that serves as a model of achievement and bravery - and yet all this still does not sufficiently explain the magnificent victories of the German forces, for the ultimate secret of these successes, unprecedented in history, lies in the genius of Adolf Hitler's military artistry, who, as a true leader, a

soldier, and a politician, fought the battles and led the campaigns - all of this will be discussed in the following.

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It was the tragedy of the German army in the First World War that, undefeated on the battlefield, it had to accept its decline and collapse in November 1918 - in the years that followed, the full hatred of a hostile world was directed at all those forces in Germany that derived their existence or the best of their character from the military tradition of Prussian-German history, for it was not the weapons—though they were destroyed—that were feared most, but rather, the "victors" feared the spirit that had forged, mined, and wielded those weapons; that is why their wrath was directed at "militarism" and "Prussianism," concepts in which all enemies of the Reich saw this spirit embodied.

Even though broad strata of the German people allowed themselves to be captivated by other, new ideals, the memory of all that had made Prussia and Germany great—and had offered the German people shelter and protection in the years when the whole world had risen against the Reich—lived on in the finest soldiers of the First World War, even in the darkest times of German humiliation: these were discipline and order, the will to serve the whole without asking for reward, the belief that the sacrifices of the First World War could not have been in vain, and finally, the willingness of the best to risk their lives in the hour of need.

True, the Versailles Dictate had stripped the Reich of its strong armaments, yet the numerically weak Reichswehr still retained the ability to preserve and keep pure the spirit of true soldierly virtue within its ranks, despite all the obstacles and contradictions posed by its enemies and its own government - thus, under this republic—which tolerated the notion that "a heroic death is the most foolish of all deaths" and which had nothing but contempt and scorn for military ideals—the spirit of the front endured within the hundred-thousand-strong army.

These were bitter years for officers and men alike: the days when cardboard tanks were dragged across the fields during Reichswehr maneuvers; when German units were forbidden to carry heavy weapons, and when all aircraft had been taken from the German army - but it was almost worse that even in the Reichstag, a pitiful parliamentary haggling had to be conducted to secure approval for the armored ships graciously granted by the Treaty of Versailles: many of the best soldiers saw no way out of the state of powerlessness and indignity in those years, even though the education within the army, the spirit, and the training of the troops suggested a turn for the better.

The Treaty of Versailles had also demanded the abolition of the General Staff, knowing full well that the finest minds in the German army had always emerged from its ranks - the idea of dismantling it was, at the very least, logical if one wished to destroy Germany's military strength.

But while one could close the gates to the sphere of influence of Scharnhorst, Moltke, Schlieffen, and Ludendorff, one could no longer eradicate their spirit, their school of thought, and their tradition, for all of this had by then become an inalienable asset of the German armed forces for all time - never, however, was it more difficult for the German Wehrmacht to uphold this great tradition than in the years between the collapse in November 1918 and the National Socialist revolution in January 1933.

With good reason, Schlieffen's characterful maxim, "Be more than you seem," served as the guiding principle of all military thinking in the German army during this bleak era of German defenselessness, which was at the same time an epoch of German powerlessness and lawlessness.
The principles of the Weimar state were different, and in every respect, they were opposed to this way of thinking - thus, a deep chasm lay between this state and its hundred-thousand-man army, a chasm that never closed in its fifteen years of existence.
When, on January 30th, 1933, the stormtroopers of the SA and SS marched through the Brandenburg Gate to the cheers of hundreds of thousands to renew their oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler on the day he seized power, the masses on Wilhelmstraße were at the same time witnesses to an event of profound symbolic significance: before the endless columns of the National Socialist revolution who saluted Adolf Hitler as their Führer on Wilhelmplatz, they also saluted Field Marshal von Hindenburg, the most venerable representative of the glorious armies of the World War, in front of the Reich President's Palace: it is said that the old gentleman did not move from the window for hours that evening, because for the first time he had felt and known that a new era—intimately linked to the symbols of the past so dear to him—was marching past in the step of the brown battalions.
Millions of Germans felt just as the aged Field Marshal did - they drew strength and confidence from this for the hard and arduous work of the years that were to follow.

What the National Socialist Revolution inherited from the Weimar Republic was rotten rubble and decline in all spheres of life—in economy and culture—as well as the disintegration, division, and fragmentation of all national forces - it was a great stroke of luck for the Reich that the only two factors of power emerging from the chaos of the collapsed state—the Wehrmacht and the Party—pursued the same goal that was based on the same principles: to restore honor and power to Germany; thus they found common ground in this shared objective.
One can only understand Germany's unprecedented rise since the National Socialists came to power by recognizing the military ethos in its fundamental attitude, which the Führer had transferred to the political sphere during the long years of struggle, just as he subsequently set a lofty political goal before the Wehrmacht - as a veteran of the front lines, it had become clear to the Führer early in his political career that Germany needed a finely honed military to reestablish itself, and for this reason, the German soldier and the German military always stood outside the political arena for the National Socialist movement.
The Party itself, based on its principle of selection—which never appealed to the complacent, let alone the weak or the cowardly, but always sought to attract the courageous and the combative—had gathered those who thought and acted like soldiers into its ranks, thus, it was also able to bridge the gap between the people and the army, between the state and the Wehrmacht, from a military perspective.
From the very beginning, the party's defense policy demands culminated in the concept of a people's army—which has since become a reality; in the abolition of the Versailles Dictate—which has likewise been achieved—the party and the Wehrmacht found common ground once again.

On countless occasions, the Führer has made it clear to the German people and to the whole world that he sees the military tradition of the great Prussian-German past as a cornerstone of the National Socialist state - thus, in accordance with his will, the first state ceremony following the seizure of power was a tribute to Frederick the Great, the immortal Soldier King, in the Potsdam Garrison Church, and in the same spirit, National Socialist Germany honored Field Marshal von Hindenburg, the commander-in-chief of the World War.

By order of the Führer, the illustrious, glory-laden names of Germany's past were brought back to life in the young Wehrmacht: Richthofen in the form of an Air Force squadron, Tirpitz in the form of one of the most modern battleships, and—as a sign that our present feels obligated to think in terms of a Greater Germany—Prince Eugene in the form of a heavy cruiser.

But it would be wrong to speak of a German revolution if, since coming to power, National Socialism had limited itself merely to restoring the honor of neglected values from the past, for even the first years of the new Reich have proven that the restoration of old military traditions fulfills only a part of the work of reconstruction - from the very beginning, the focus of all political action in the Third Reich lay in the implementation of revolutionary ideas which, like a turning point in chemical processes, have brought about the great transformation in the German people and in Europe; meanwhile, within the German people themselves, the revolutionary dynamism of National Socialism unleashed all healthy forces to participate in the rebuilding of Greater Germany, and in the process, it became clear that the poison injected into the body of the people by foreign spirit and blood had by no means yet corroded the marrow. With unparalleled enthusiasm and passion, all Germans—regardless of social class, denomination, or tribe—now once again pledged their allegiance to the nation; the number of those standing on the sidelines was never worth mentioning, especially since they exhausted themselves—devoid of any positive ideas of their own—in fruitless criticism - people of this sort could oppose nothing, absolutely nothing, to the national passion that suddenly erupted in Germany.

The concept of the nation proved to be just as dynamic in the struggle of foreign policy as it was at home; the concept of the nation, which the Führer not only introduced into political discourse, but elevated to a political creed for all Germans, mobilized the advocates of the International of every stripe: the cry "Home to the Reich" shattered the fragile foundations of the League of Nations; it toppled the laboriously propped-up edifice of the Treaty of Versailles, and to the Council of the Sated, this meant "revolution"! All beneficiaries of the Parisian suburban treaties—and that was every nation in Europe except Bulgaria and Hungary—saw their existence threatened by the national idea emanating from the Reich with unstoppable force; they thus inevitably became—one is tempted to say—enemies of the new, natural order that was beginning to take shape for the first time in Central Europe.

Even more revolutionary than the racial idea was the impact of the socialist idea in Europe and throughout the world - the battle cry "Labor versus Gold" stirred up Jewry throughout the world and ultimately brought the plutocracies of England and America, which were subservient to it, onto the scene; meanwhile, Germany's rapidly advancing internal reconstruction, its newly structured economic and monetary system, and its steadily growing foreign trade—which remained liquid even without gold—served as an exemplary model.

All of this was new and unheard of! It aroused astonishment and admiration among friends and provoked hatred and opposition among enemies, and thus, under the banner of a new work ethic, one that had freed itself from the bondage of gold, the world began to divide into "haves" and "have-nots" - ultimately, the hatred was directed against National Socialist Germany solely because it had brought unrest into a complacent world, yet not a single politician among the plutocratic powers thought to discuss the motives behind Germany's forward-pressing policies and revolutionary methods in the economy, and even less were they prepared to counter this upheaval of all their outdated principles through a reasonable reorganization—one that would have been possible by peaceful means just two years earlier and for which Adolf Hitler had ceaselessly submitted proposals.

It may seem as though we have digressed too far - certainly not! For the essence of the German armed forces of the present day can only be understood through these two concepts just discussed: “tradition” and “revolution.”
Fate decreed that the German Wehrmacht—for whose expansion and strengthening the Führer worked tirelessly, and for whose armament the German people labored day and night—would complete the building of the Reich; fate decreed that the German Wehrmacht, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, would create the conditions for the reorganization of Europe; fate decreed that the German Wehrmacht, in the colossal struggle against Bolshevism, would become the standard-bearer for the culture of the entire civilized world.
It could only accomplish such tasks from a spiritual stance that was conscious of its mission - not only the German people, but to an even greater extent the peoples of Europe, recognized in the German soldiers—whether they came to them as friends or as victors—the standard-bearers of a new era: in amazement, they all beheld the clear gaze of these men, their proud bearing, their self-assured yet measured demeanor; they all heard their songs, carried by a captivating rhythm! It became clear to them all that they had been overcome not only by the weapons of the German Wehrmacht, but equally by the ideological world of National Socialist Germany.

And yet—wars are not fought in the realm of the spirit: that is why an army’s weapons are no less important than its morale and its spiritual attitude.
The Reich Marshal once rightly commented on a daily order by Gamelin, the former French commander-in-chief, who had said that “military discipline and toughness are the best counterweight to tanks” - the German Wehrmacht achieved its victorious campaigns not least because it had the best weapons in the world, since during the World War, the Führer had to fully experience the bitterness of the feeling a soldier feels when he is hopelessly at the mercy of the enemy’s superiority: thus, knowing the needs of the front lines, he created the most modern tanks, the most penetrating shells, the fastest fighters, and the long-range combat aircraft; thus he established the most modern formations in the airborne troops and paratrooper units; thus he made the German Luftwaffe the strongest in the world, and finally, he brought the numerically still weak Kriegsmarine to a level of armament and training that enabled it to deal serious blows to British naval power.
The superiority of German arms thus created has so far defeated every opponent in open battle - it gave the German assault engineers the means to take the strongest fortifications in the world: the Maginot Line, the Metaxas Line, and the Stalin Line; the high standard and quality of motorization in the German Wehrmacht also created the conditions for the crushing of the Bolshevik armies, which were unmatched in the number of their motorized units.
The most important result of this immense armament, which was built up from scratch in Germany within six years, is this: that the superiority of German arms has spared the German people many precious sacrifices of blood.
All campaigns were won with losses that were almost unbelievably low - the inventor, the engineer, and the German worker deserve the gratitude of the homeland and the front for this.

The gigantic struggle against the massively armed Soviet armies has nevertheless proven that weapons, equipment, and engines are not decisive in battle, nor even masses of millions - ultimately, it still comes down to—or rather, it comes down again to—the people who are fighting.

When we leaf through the pages of this book and let the image of the German soldier sink in, our hearts swell at the sight of these magnificent figures! Someone might now object that this is a selection of particularly fine minds - it is not!
Everywhere German soldiers march, we encounter these figures: proud and upright, tanned and athletic, with a straight, alert gaze—that is how they present themselves. The discipline of their appearance matches their inner attitude - it certainly has nothing to do with racial arrogance to claim that the German soldier, in his entire outward appearance, stands out to the advantage over all his opponents, for a German musketeer is certainly not comparable to a Bolshevik in appearance, bearing, or demeanor.
While hard fighting may well have triggered despondency and indifference among the Bolshevik prisoners, the dullness we read in all their faces is and remains a characteristic of their race; in contrast stands the German soldier, who masters technical weapons with incomparable dexterity because he has been familiar with engines and machinery since childhood; who follows not only the orders of his superiors but also his inner voice; and who, by virtue of his intelligence and outstanding military training, is capable of making decisions and acting on his own in difficult, even desperate situations.
Relying on this quality of the troops, the High Command of the Wehrmacht has often undertaken ventures of the greatest audacity and brought them to a successful conclusion - thus, the German soldier has never failed.

The leadership itself, the troop staff, and the higher staff have performed outstandingly - while the German officer has always been the epitome of military virtues, in this war, however, he has surpassed even himself.
Adolf Hitler's style of warfare, for which the enemy coined the apt name "Blitzkrieg," meant that even division headquarters moved their command posts to the front lines: division commanders were seen, to cite just one example, at the forefront of their tanks - "Where the commander stands is the front"—so went a saying among the troops in this war of locked fronts.
The number of senior officers who fell at the front is not small, and the figures for officers killed in action are high in proportion to the otherwise low losses of this war - as painful as this fact is in itself, it stands as a shining testament to the German Wehrmacht and the German officer corps, for the extraordinary feats of the troops, often bordering on the miraculous, attest to the inspiring power of example, of leading by example and being the first to fall.
The final report on the campaign in France contains classically phrased sentences; they shed light on the reasons to which the High Command of the Wehrmacht attributes the victory of German arms on all fronts:

"Where Germany's enemies believed they saw our weakness, in the revolutionary dynamism of the Third Reich and its National Socialist leadership, the reasons for German successes are to be found: it has created the finest modern instrument of war with a strict and unified supreme command; it has found the synthesis between soberly considered and meticulous preparation and the greatest boldness in the planning and conduct of operations; it has elevated the achievements of the German soldier, famous in times past, to such an extent that this can no longer be explained by the fulfillment of a patriotic duty, but rather by an idea that sustains and moves the united people.
The exemplary, personal dedication of all military leaders of the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe, down to the lowest ranks, will remain a glorious chapter for all time - in ground combat, on the front lines, and at

the head of their formations in the air, they drove their troops and their squadrons forward and, bold, agile, and decisive, exploited every situation without hesitation or waiting for orders."

To these words it remains only to add that throughout this war, the young German Kriegsmarine has also proved itself worthy of its comrades on land and in the air: in the Norwegian campaign, under the watchful eye of the British fleet, it made a decisive contribution to victory through death-defying operations, and in the North Sea, the English Channel, the waters around England, and on all the world's oceans, it has remained true to its proud tradition - thus, all three branches of the armed forces—the Wehrmacht, the Luftwaffe, and the Kriegsmarine—have an equal share in the victories of the German armed forces, which are already without precedent in history.

The ultimate secret of Germany's colossal military successes, however, is revealed in full only to those who have recognized the Führer's role in the planning and direction of military operations in the north and south, in the west and east - soldiers of the highest rank, foremost among them Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, have spoken of the Führer's military leadership with the utmost admiration; the Reich Marshal, who knows Adolf Hitler's thoughts and plans better than perhaps any other man, once pointed out during the French campaign that the Führer's brilliant leadership had laid the foundation for all successes:

"As the great statesman of our time, Adolf Hitler has, in recent years, expanded the Reich without the use of arms as no head of state has ever done before."

Through him we know that the Führer himself devised all the campaign plans for this war and thought them through down to the last detail: his knowledge in the field of military technology, his familiarity with the entire body of military literature, and his experience as a front-line soldier in the Great War enable him, like no other commander, to correctly assess the capabilities and limitations of both man and material - it was only thus that the German Wehrmacht became, in his hands, a devastating weapon against all enemies of the Reich.
Through the generosity and boldness of his operational decisions, Adolf Hitler has even surprised his staff, for whom the extraordinary has certainly become the norm over the years; his opponents, however, he has in every case confronted with unexpected strategic situations to which their art of war was never a match:

"...even in his military leadership, Adolf Hitler is a revolutionary."

He waged his breakthrough and annihilation battles in disregard of—indeed, in a deliberate reversal of—previously valid strategic principles; in the ingenuity of his operational decisions, every campaign proved anew the genius of his strategic thinking.
As grand as Adolf Hitler's plans are in their entirety, he nevertheless pays close attention to even the smallest details - he had every detail of the assault on fortifications, the establishment of bridgeheads, and other individual operations reported to him, and drawing on his own experience, he provided suggestions and issued orders in many cases: only in this way was it possible to destroy the enemy on all fronts, while the losses of the German Wehrmacht were negligible in light of the great historical decisions now at stake.

The goal of Adolf Hitler's entire conduct of the war was always to fight the decisive battles of the campaign using the most modern weapons and methods while sparing the troops as much as possible; the Führer succeeded in achieving this goal as no commander before him had, and not least for this reason, military history will rank his name among the greatest commanders of all time.

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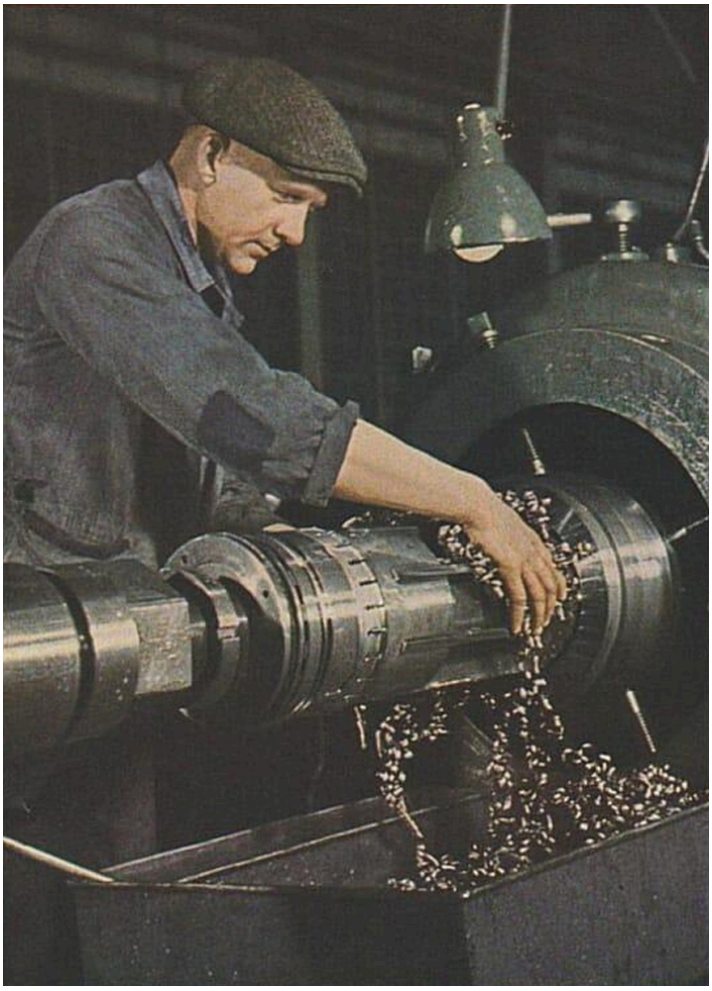
We want to attempt to interpret the German soldiery of our time - we see it embodied in the death-defying struggle of the Unknown Soldier of all branches of service on all fronts, in the inspiring example of officers of all ranks, and finally in the brilliant military leadership of Adolf Hitler, who was once himself an unknown front-line soldier; thus the circle is closed, the breadth of which could only be hinted at in the preceding pages.
May these words, together with the following images, bring the concept of German soldierhood closer to the reader and viewer in its essential values - if this succeeds, then the book will have fulfilled its intention and purpose.

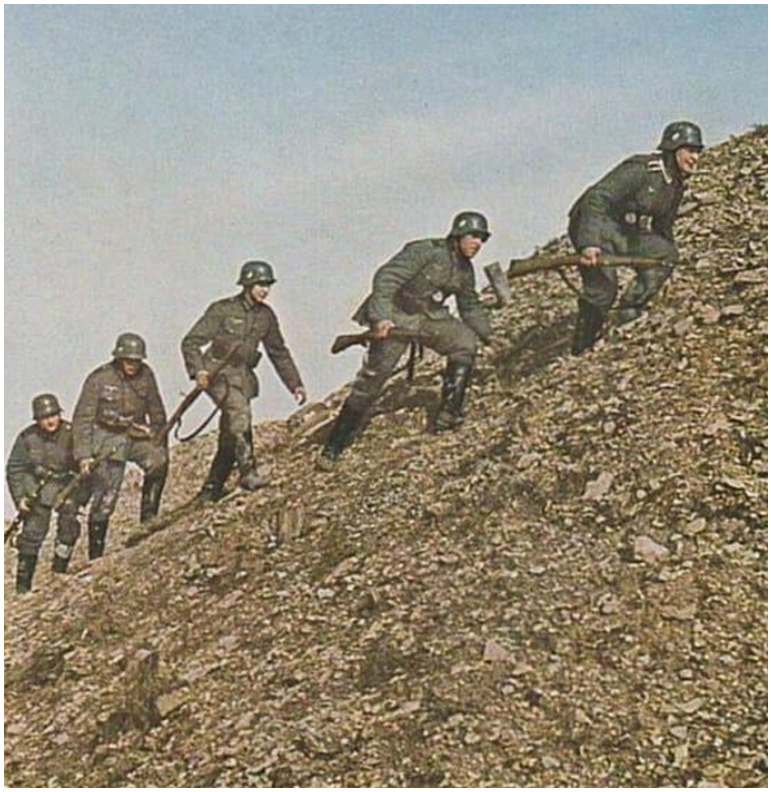


"...the German soldier thanks you, the arms manufacturers, for providing him with weapons, for in every respect, our weapons were superior - that is to your credit! It is the result of your craftsmanship, your diligence and skill, and your dedication!
We are not only the best soldiers in the world, but we also have the best weapons in the world—and not just today, but even more so in the future!"

- The Führer addressing German armaments workers on December 10th, 1940

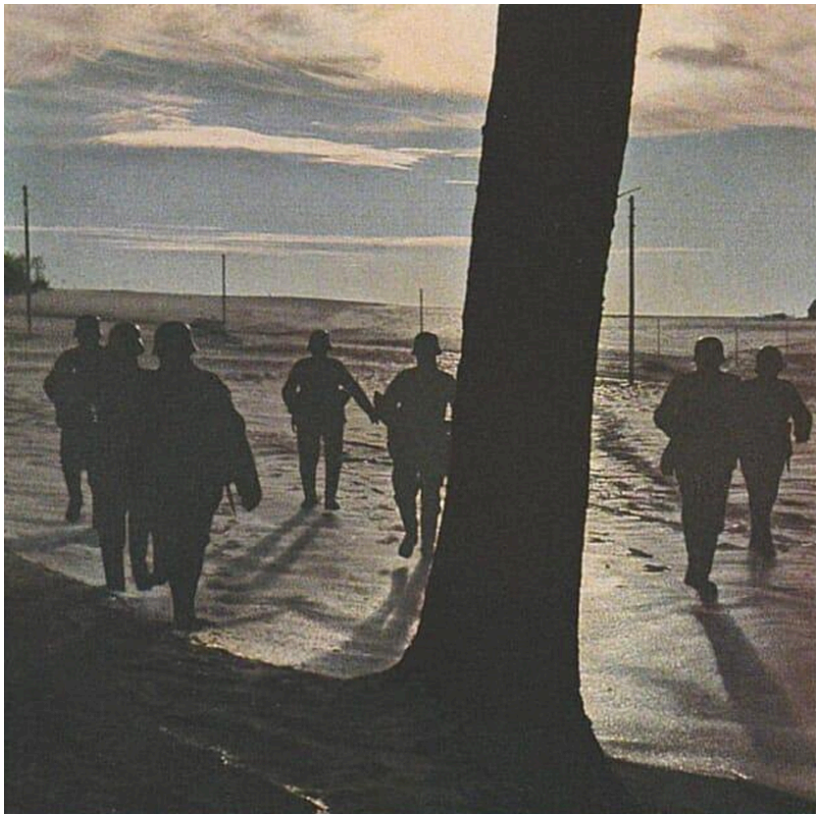
“The German soldier is the best in the world”—this is the praise Adolf Hitler bestowed upon the German soldier following a series of glorious victories - trained in the tough school of the German Wehrmacht, equipped with the most modern weapons, led by an exemplary officer corps, and filled with the dynamism of a young, hopeful idea, the German soldier follows the Führer’s orders and adds victory after victory to his record.

Marching, fighting, and marching again—motorized warfare demands the utmost from marching troops. No matter how far the motorized units advance, the infantry is always there when the enemy has dug in - that was the case in France, in the Balkans, and in Russia.

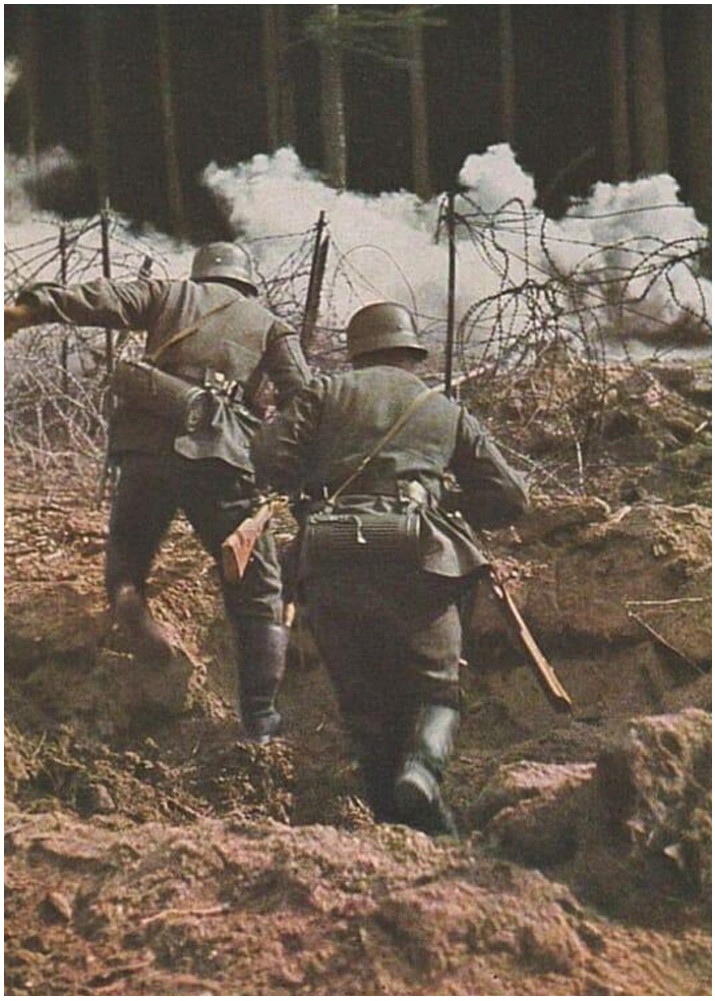


Reconnaissance unit on the move - the thorough training of the German soldier proves his worth in any terrain.

The troops' adaptability knows no bounds - this is demonstrated by the campaigns in Norway, the Balkans, Africa, and Crete, where the enemy—familiar with the country and the terrain—was consistently defeated.

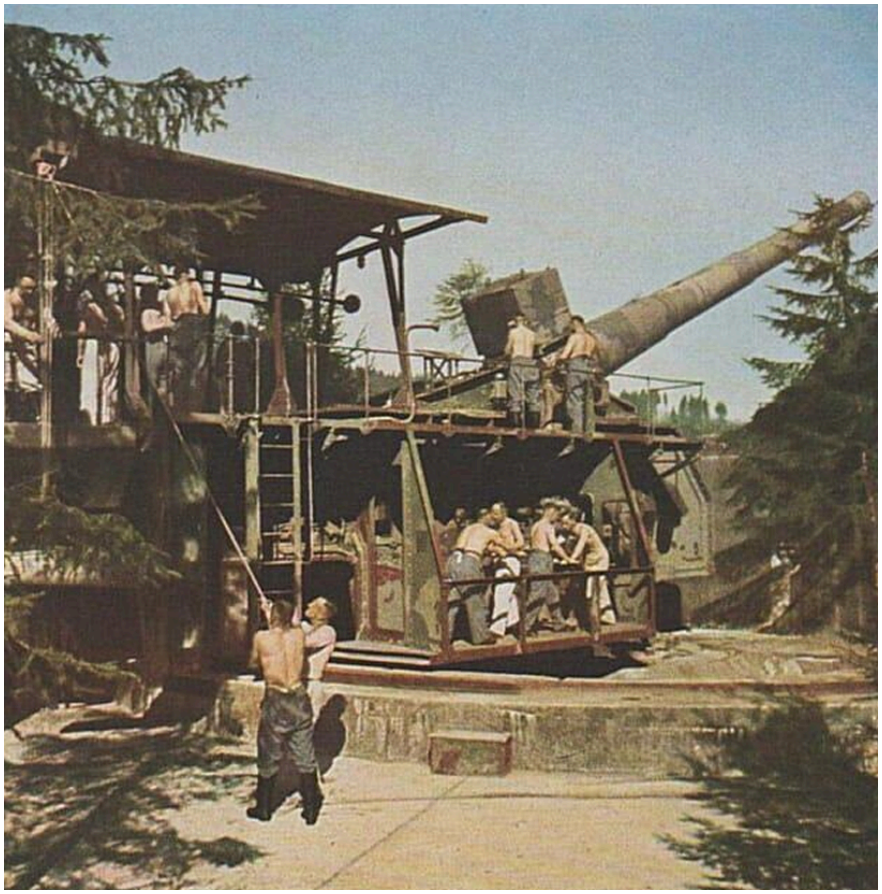


The tip of the infantry column slices through the air, and the soldiers' silhouettes look ghostly against the light; as they march, the colorless northern sun casts long shadows on the glistening snow.

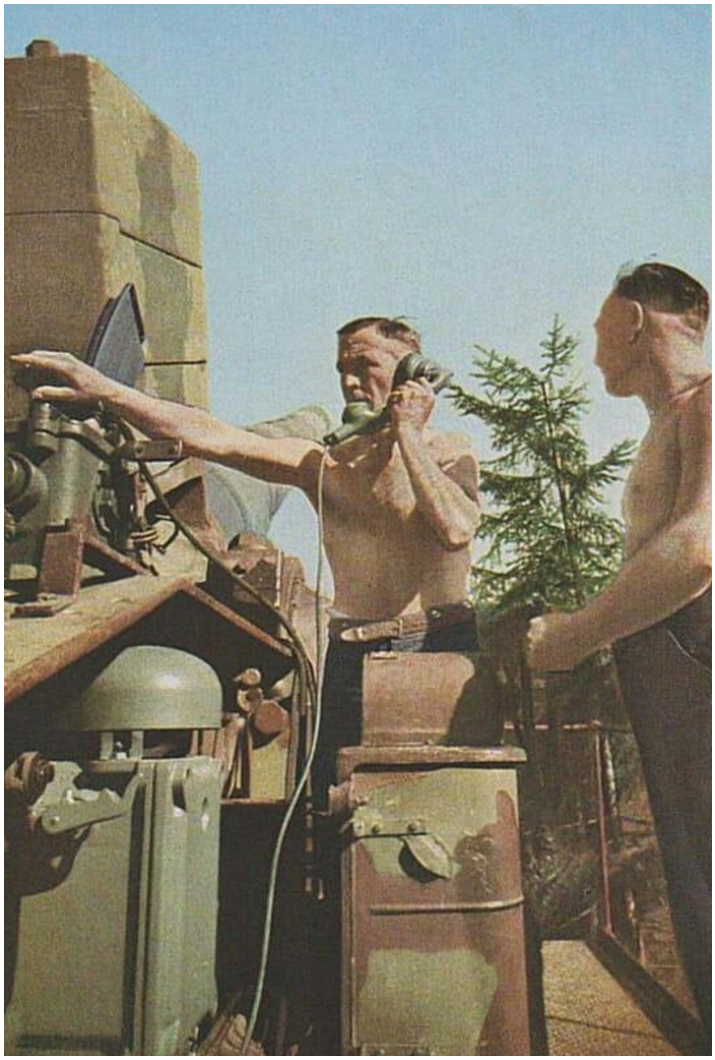


“Up! Forward! Forward!” - the command rouses the assault squad from the shell crater, and in a few strides, they reach the enemy barbed wire and overcome the obstacle; then comes a brief, fierce hand-to-hand struggle—this is how the infantry, the queen of the battlefield, breaks the enemy’s resistance.

No matter how high the embankment—it offers no protection against enemy artillery fire. The attackers lie flat against the ground - will our own weapons provide relief? One thing is certain: if the order comes, the assault troops will break through the enemy's defenses.

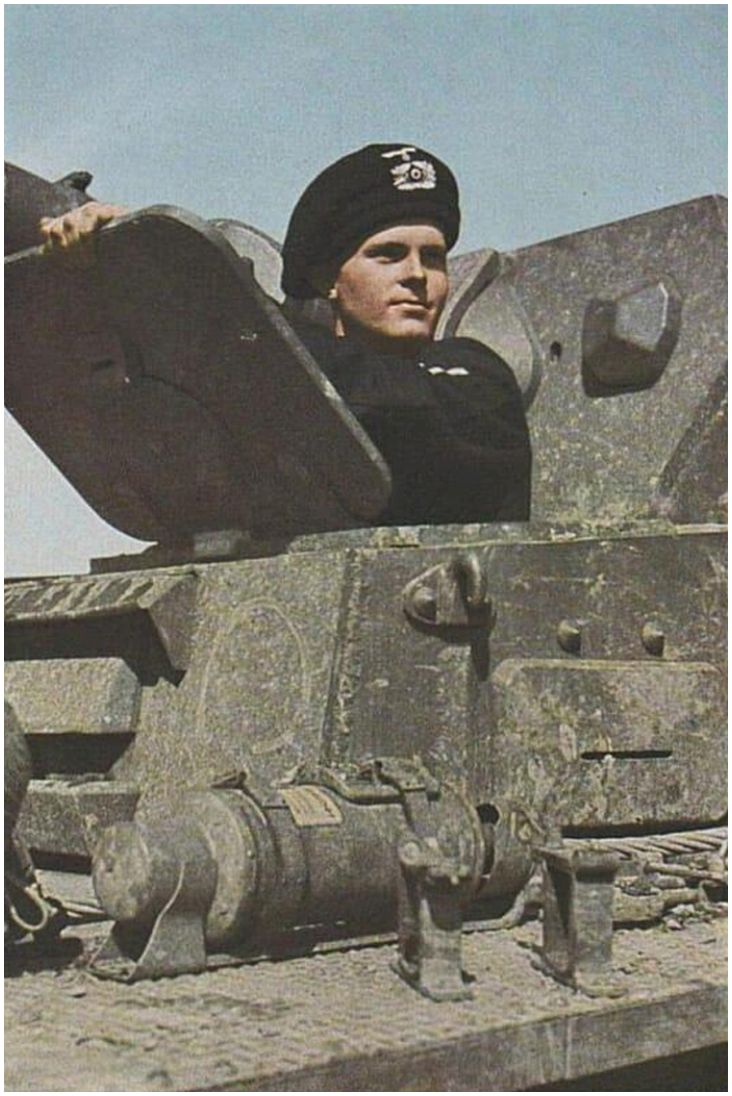


Hidden from enemy view, firmly anchored in the sand of the dunes, the long-range gun is set up at the observation post; orders are transmitted via telegraph.
The English are well aware of the danger posed by these heavy German weapons: only rarely—in foggy weather or at night—do they attempt to pass through the Channel.

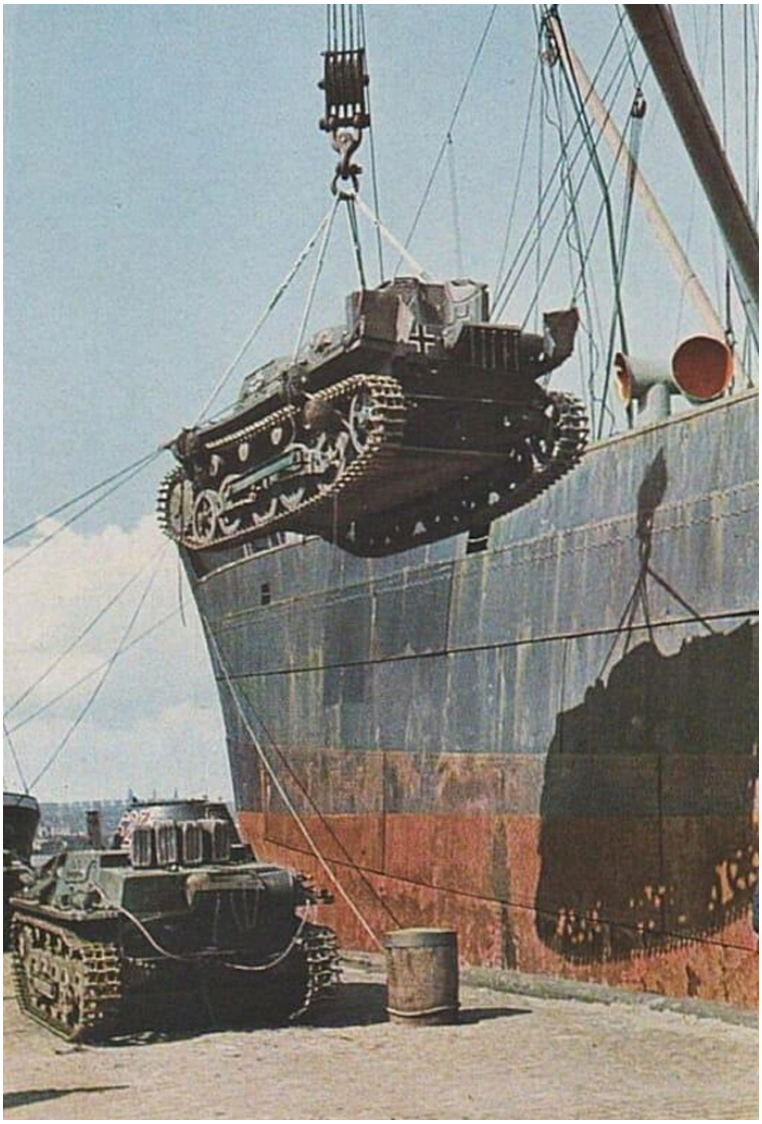


From Norway's fjords to the Bay of Biscay, the Atlantic coast of the European continent lies under the protection of German arms.
Countless batteries point their guns menacingly - British convoys in the Strait of Calais and the port of Dover have experienced the firepower of German long-range artillery all too often.

A heavy-caliber long-range gun fires, and with a tremendous explosion, the shell—weighing many hundred pounds—leaves the massive barrel; Germany also holds a superior position over its adversaries in heavy artillery.



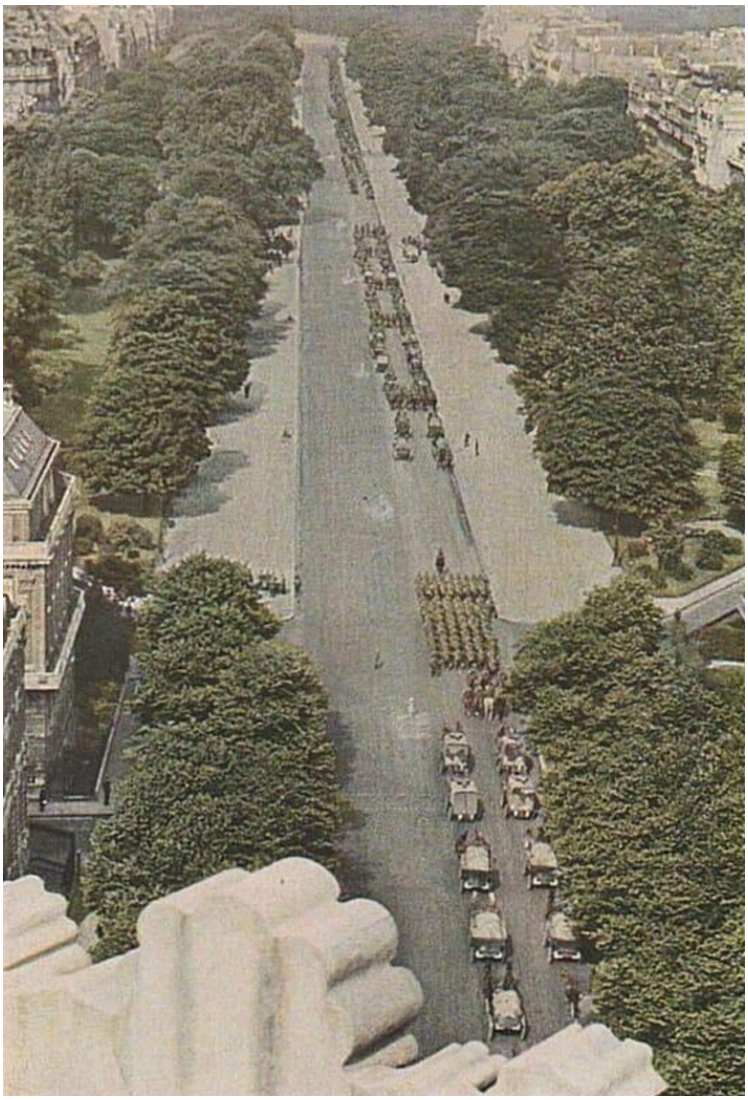
“The Black Hussars of Modern Warfare.” — that is what the common people have called the tank corps. Bold and devastating in attack, the German tanks are the enemy’s worst nightmare.



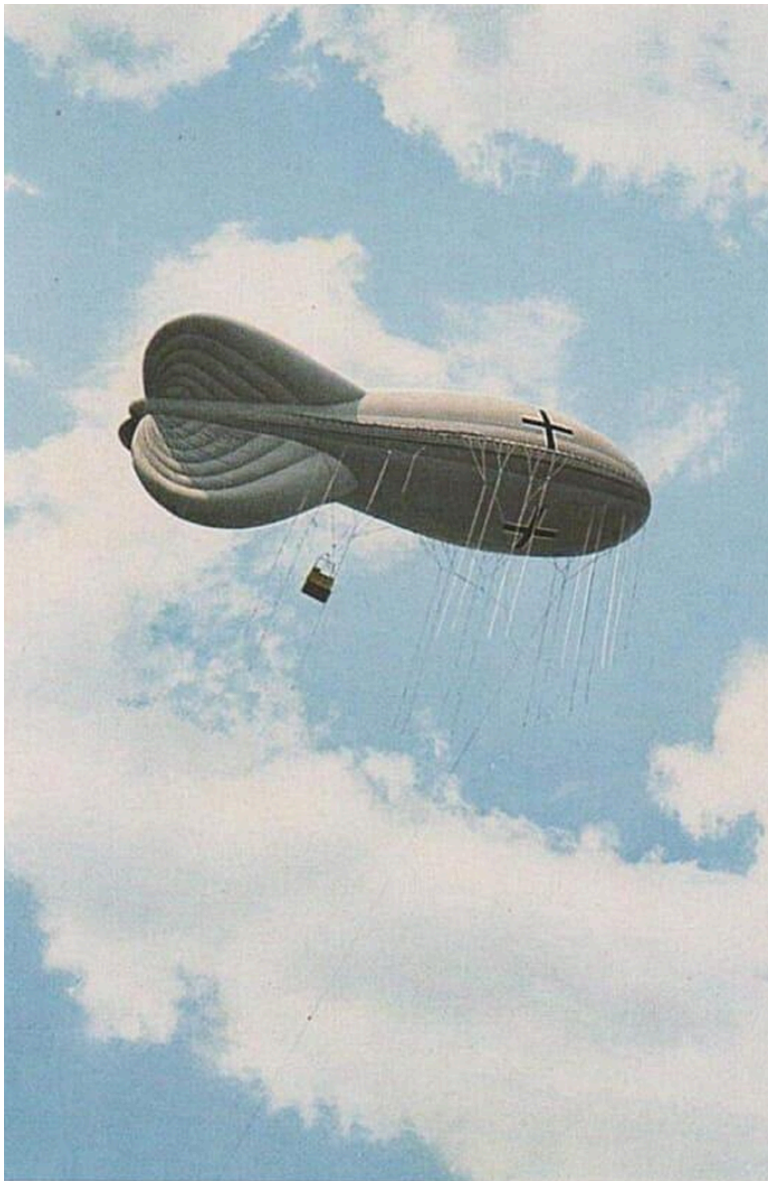
Supply of heavy tanks by sea - it was only through the exemplary cooperation of all branches of the armed forces that the daring undertaking of the Norwegian campaign was brought to a successful conclusion, for alongside the Kriegsmarine, which handled the transport and provided security at sea, the merchant marine played a commendable role in the smooth resolution of the difficult supply problem.

In the West and the East, the enemy had deployed massive tanks, which were their main hope - the German tanks have, however, proved superior to every enemy model.

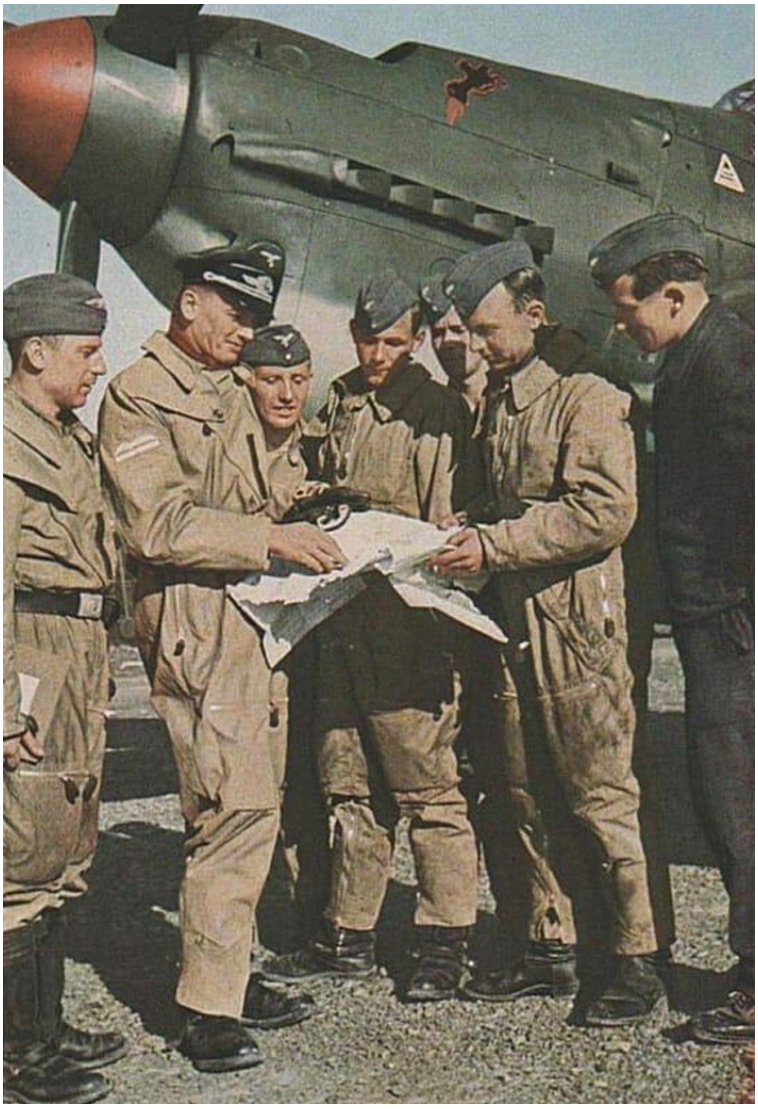
German tanks roll into position - in the vast landscape, this weapon comes into its own. Following wireless orders from command, the heavy tanks crush all resistance.



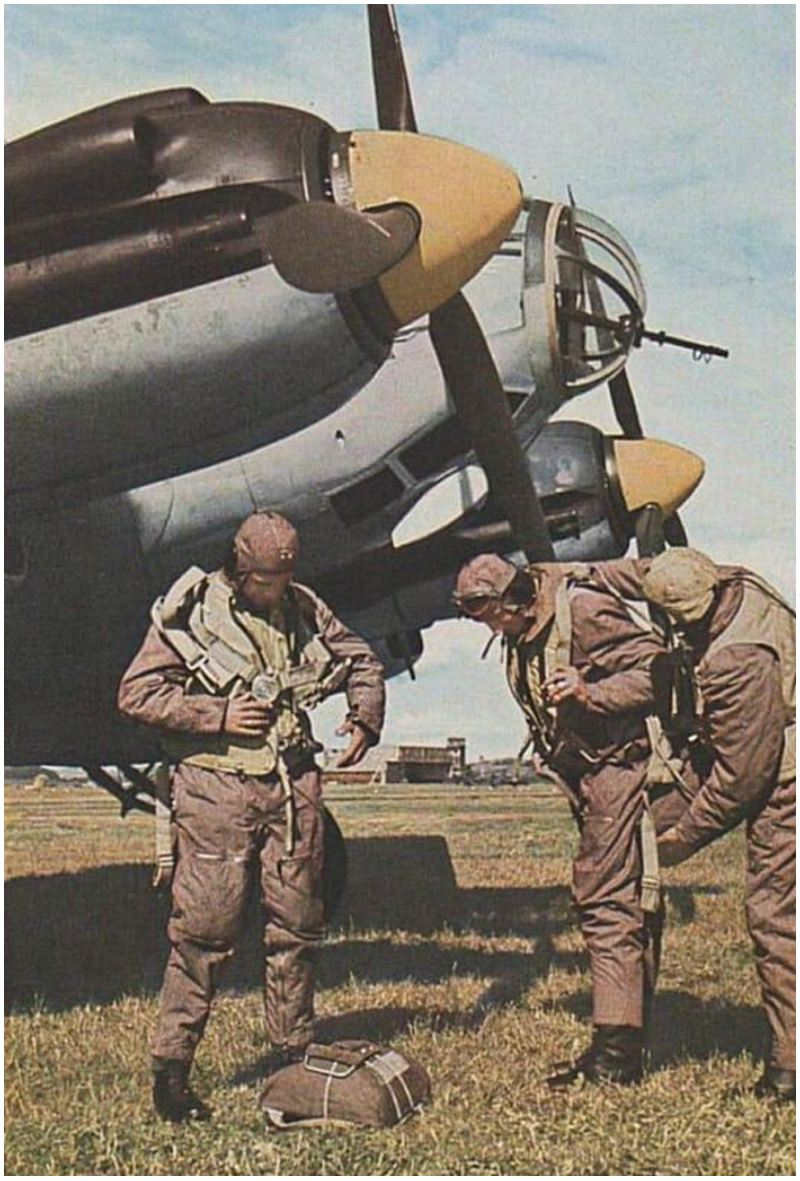
The French armies have been defeated, yet the victorious German divisions are marching south along the boulevards of the French capital - as they pass the Arc de Triomphe, even after fierce fighting and grueling forced marches, this proud spectacle remains a testament to German military bearing and discipline.



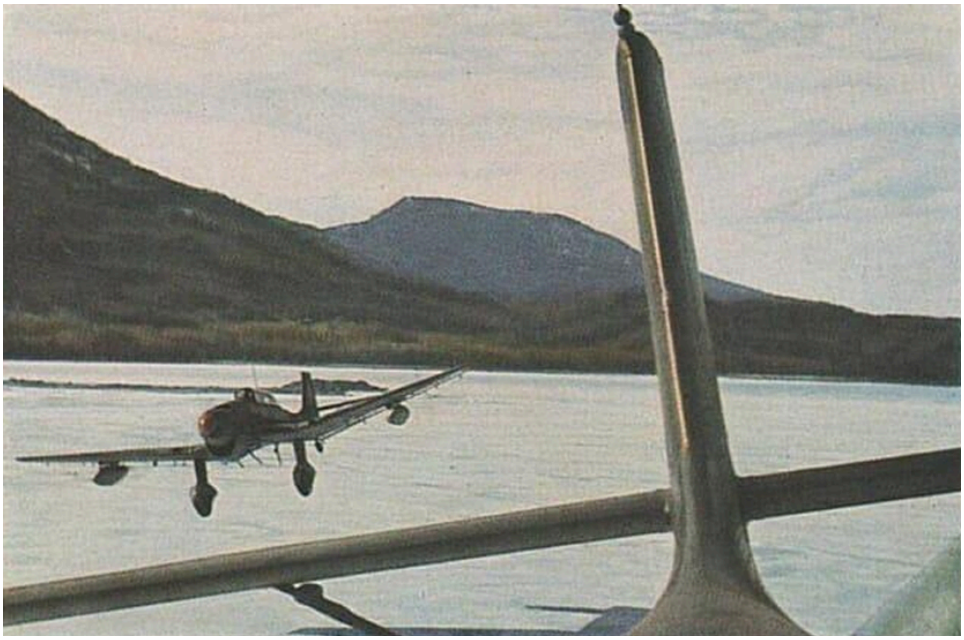
A moored balloon on observation duty - compared to the Luftwaffe's fast reconnaissance aircraft, the moored balloons seem almost antediluvian; if the German Luftwaffe did not hold air superiority in the theater of operations, these clumsy behemoths would be easy prey for enemy aircraft.



Combat pilots ready for takeoff!
One last glance at the map - the route and the assigned targets are reviewed one more time as a group before the engines start up for the flight to England.



Fellow pilots!
Before their mission against the island, the crew of a heavy fighter plane help each other put on their parachutes: they know they are bound together by victory and death, and this unconditional camaraderie has proven itself a thousand times over in moments of danger.

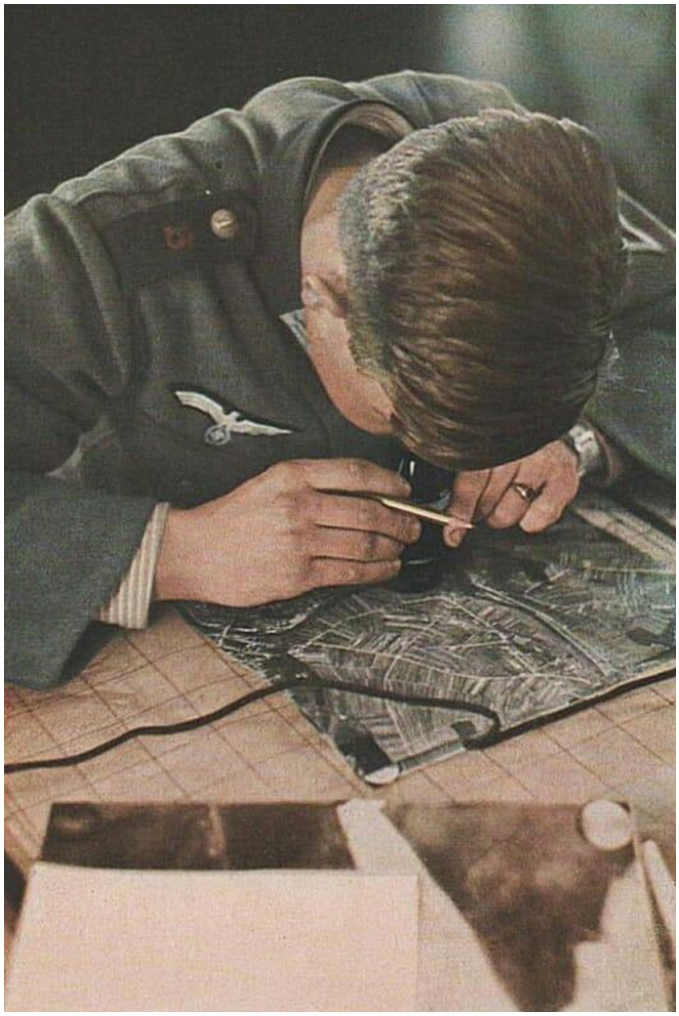


A dive bomber on the climb - feared by the enemy, the Stukas are the sharpest sword in the German Luftwaffe, and when they pitch forward from dizzying heights with their engines roaring, death and destruction rain down on the enemy.
Ships, fortifications, tanks, and armament factories—all are doomed when the Stukas come for them.

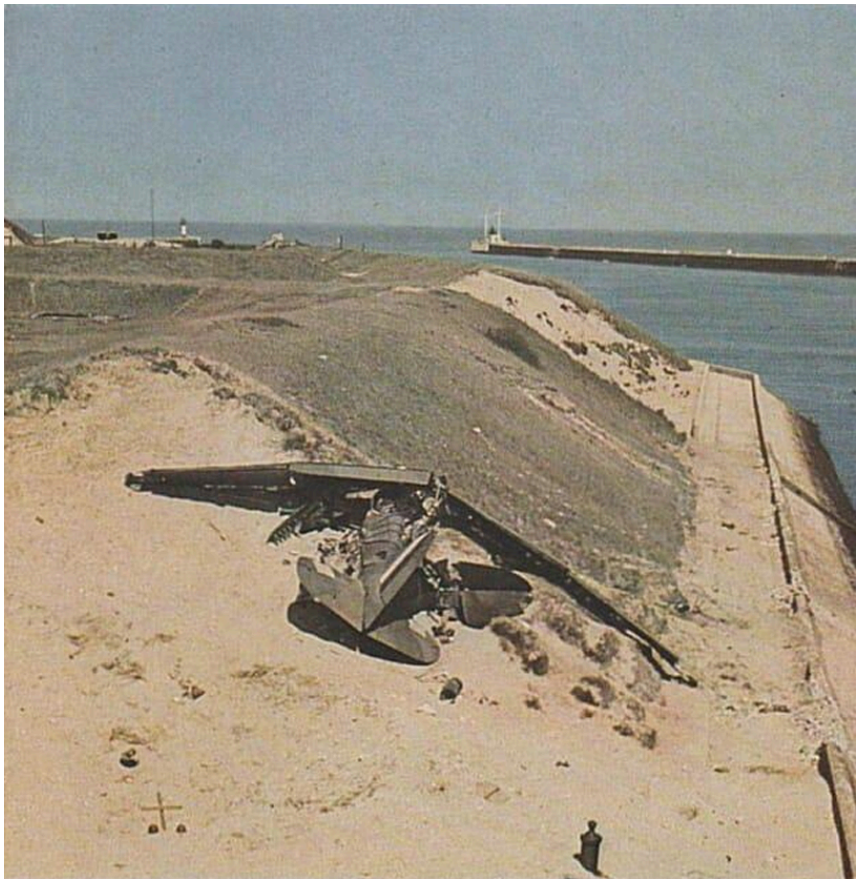
Alone, without fighter escort, the reconnaissance plane scans the open sea around the British Isles for enemy vessels.
The battle becomes fierce when it encounters enemy fighters - if it spots a convoy, the fighter planes launch a devastating attack.

After returning from a combat mission, every single fighter aircraft is carefully inspected for damage: the engine is overhauled; every detail of the tail unit and controls is checked, and the fuel tanks are refilled - now the aircraft is ready to take off again.
The German Luftwaffe's superiority over its enemies is due in no small part to the diligence and sense of responsibility of the ground crew.

The cockpit of a fighter plane - lying on his stomach, machine gun at the ready, the observer takes aim at the target; with a steady hand, the pilot steers the aircraft, connected to the observer via the headset microphone. Over the endless expanse of the Atlantic, amid the furious fire of the anti-aircraft batteries, these men and their comrades are entirely on their own: victory and success rest solely in their hands.

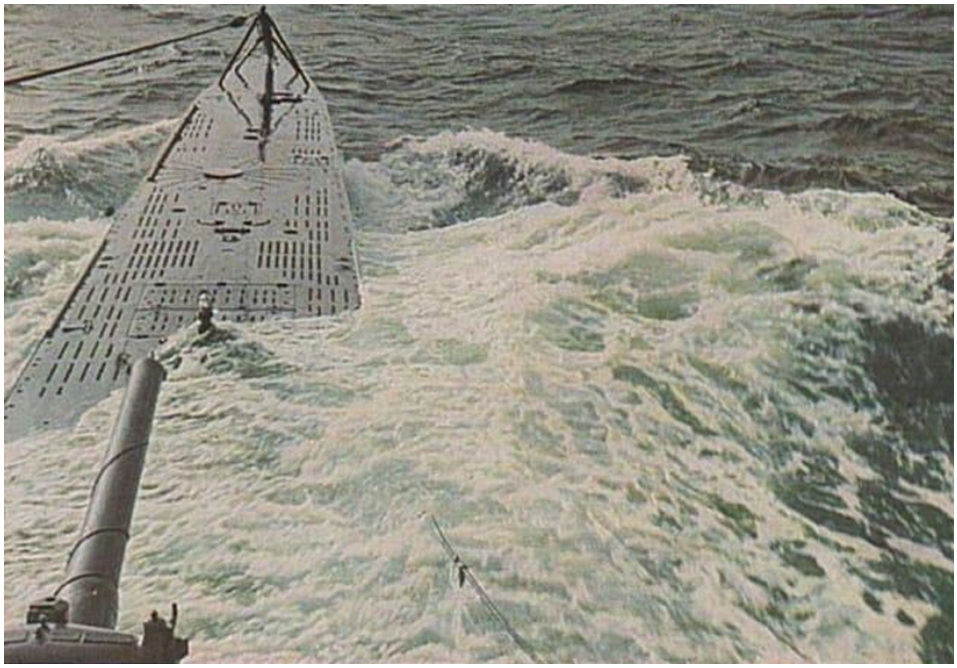


Aerial reconnaissance - thorough reconnaissance is the foundation of every air operation, since familiarity with the location and the significance of his target allows the fighter pilot to launch his attack; once he has dropped his bombs, the reconnaissance pilot then takes off to take aerial photographs.
Thousands upon thousands of photographs have confirmed the devastating effects of German attacks on the enemy's vital military targets - without the brave and self-sacrificing efforts of the reconnaissance pilots, the high command would be groping in the dark: they are the eyes of the command, a vital cog in the great machinery of the Luftwaffe!

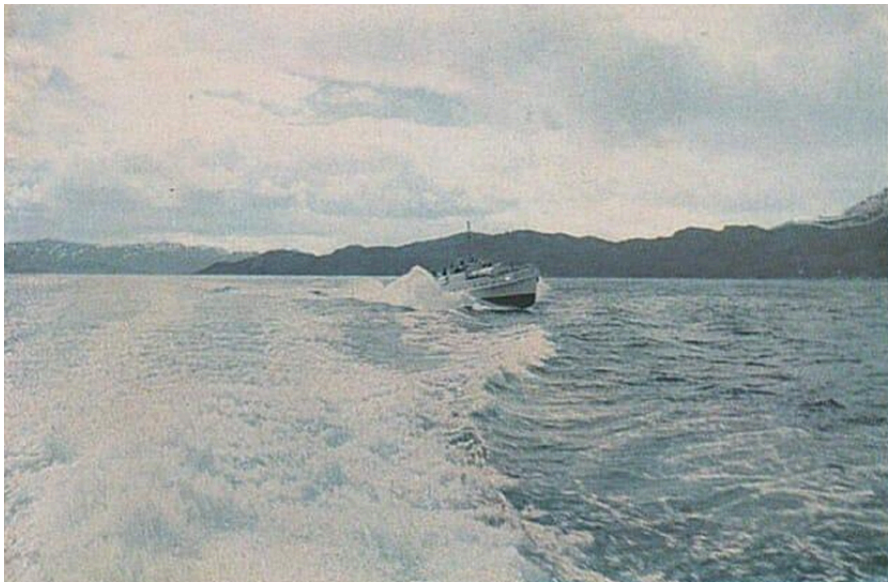


Shot down - one of hundreds!
German fighters, anti-aircraft guns, and naval artillery guard the mainland's airspace: the invading enemy is thereby dealt a heavy blow - even during the weeks of the Russian campaign, when the British thought they had free rein in the West, their formations were severely decimated.

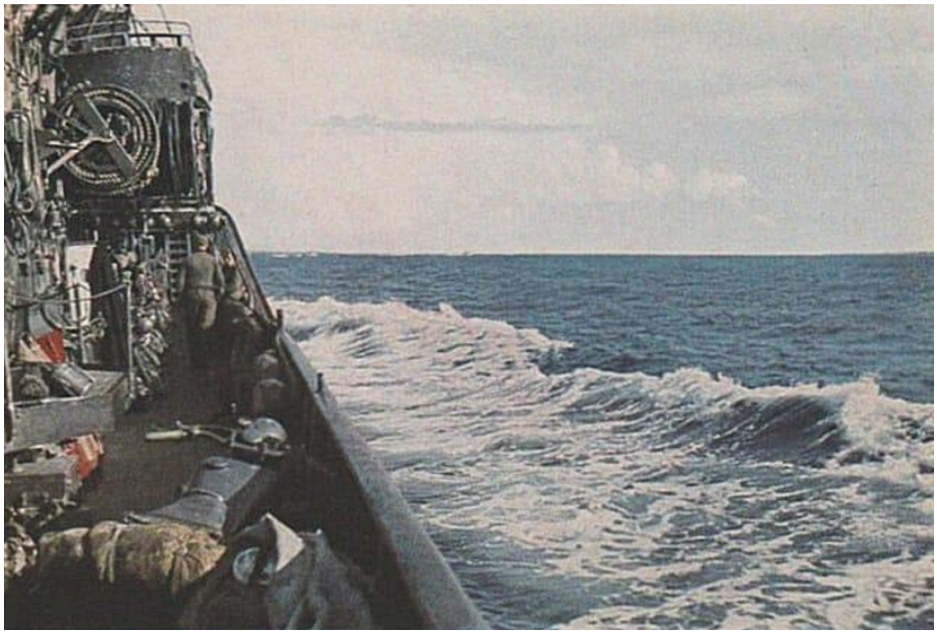
Submarines heading west!
Unlike during the World War, when they operated from the "wet triangle," German submarines in this war are operating from their bases in the waters around England.
The British blockade is backfiring: the blockader has become the blocked!



A submarine surfacing in rough seas - during weeks of arduous voyages, German submarines threaten British shipping; the Battle of the Atlantic is also being fought primarily by them.
Month after month, they sink hundreds of thousands of tons of enemy merchant shipping - they are the Reich's sharpest weapon against the island, hated and feared by the enemy.

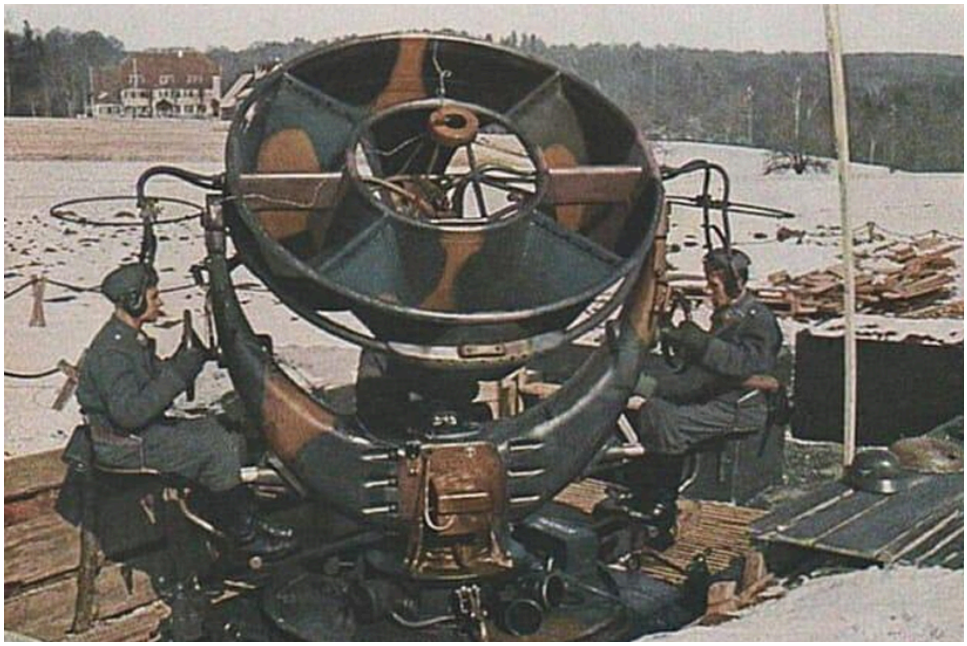


Bold and daring, lightning-fast and devastating in attack, the German torpedo boats are a dangerous weapon. From their bases on the Channel coast, they prowl as far as the British ports - woe to the convoys, torpedo boats, and destroyers of the enemy that encounter them at night.
Their deadly torpedoes are infallible; boldness and seafaring skill give the speedboats the upper hand, even against stronger opponents.

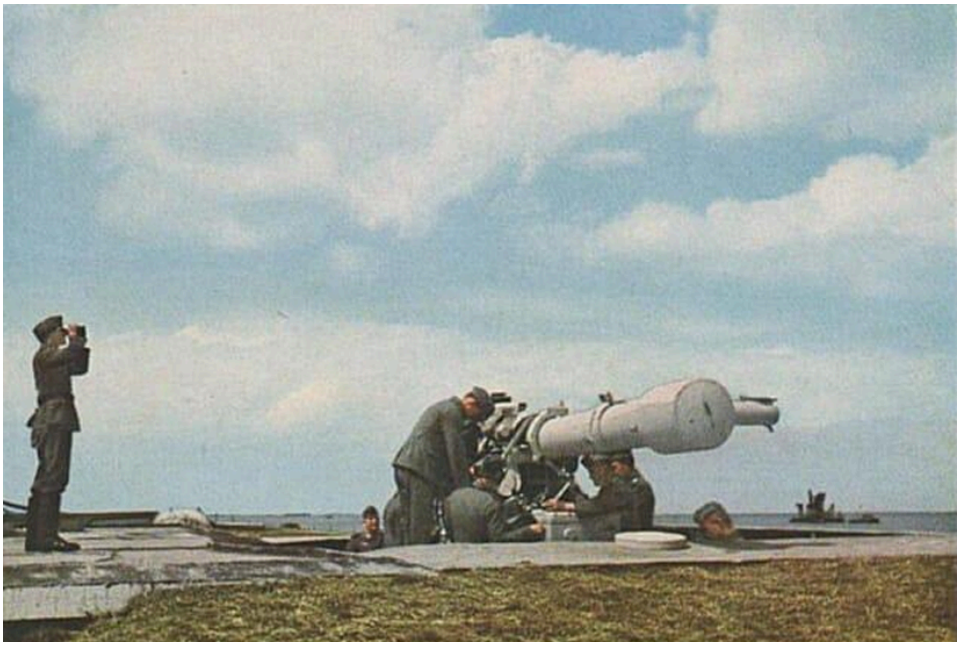


Troop transport ship underway - during the operations in Norway, Crete, and Africa, supply problems were as difficult as they were critical; they were resolved through the exemplary cooperation of the three branches of the Wehrmacht.

No force of the British fleet—neither its heavy nor its light naval forces—was able to prevent the timely delivery of personnel and supplies; the German Kriegsmarine is distinguished by an unparalleled willingness to take risks, in contrast to the British fleet, which fears any serious risk.



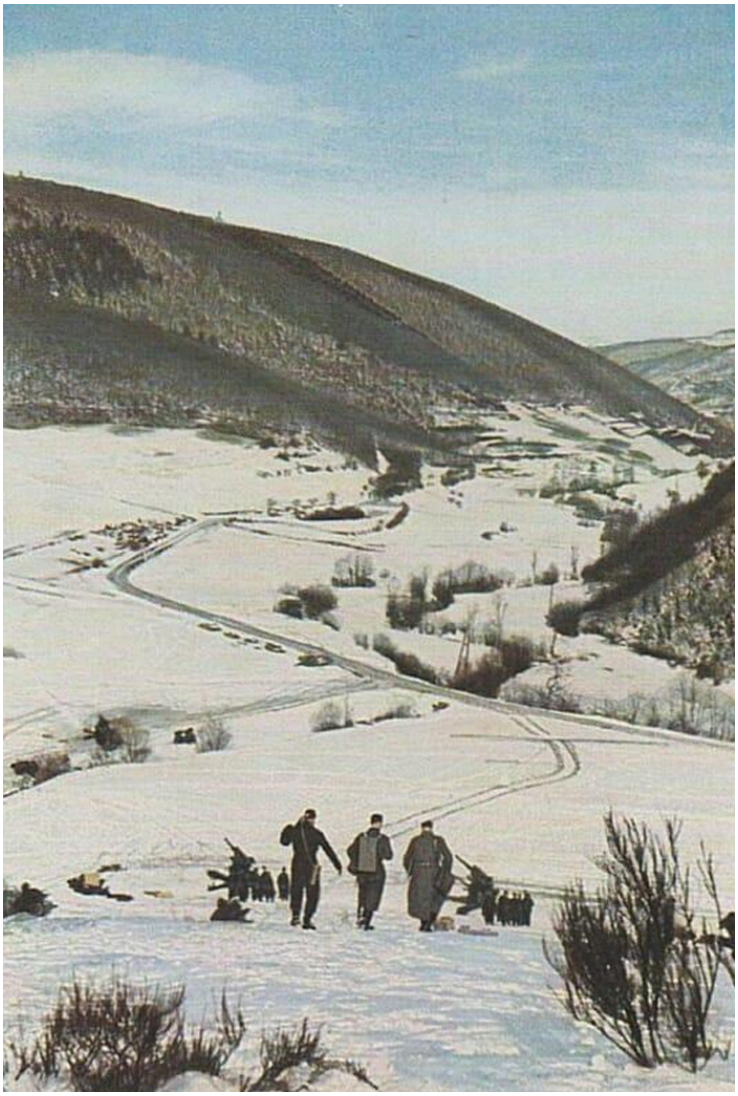
Anti-aircraft listening device - modern warfare has produced marvels of technology for both defense and attack.
Long before the human ear can detect the enemy, the “technical ear” has already picked up the sound of the enemy’s machinery.
Operating such complex devices requires quick comprehension and intelligence - the German soldier meets these high demands of modern warfare more easily than others.



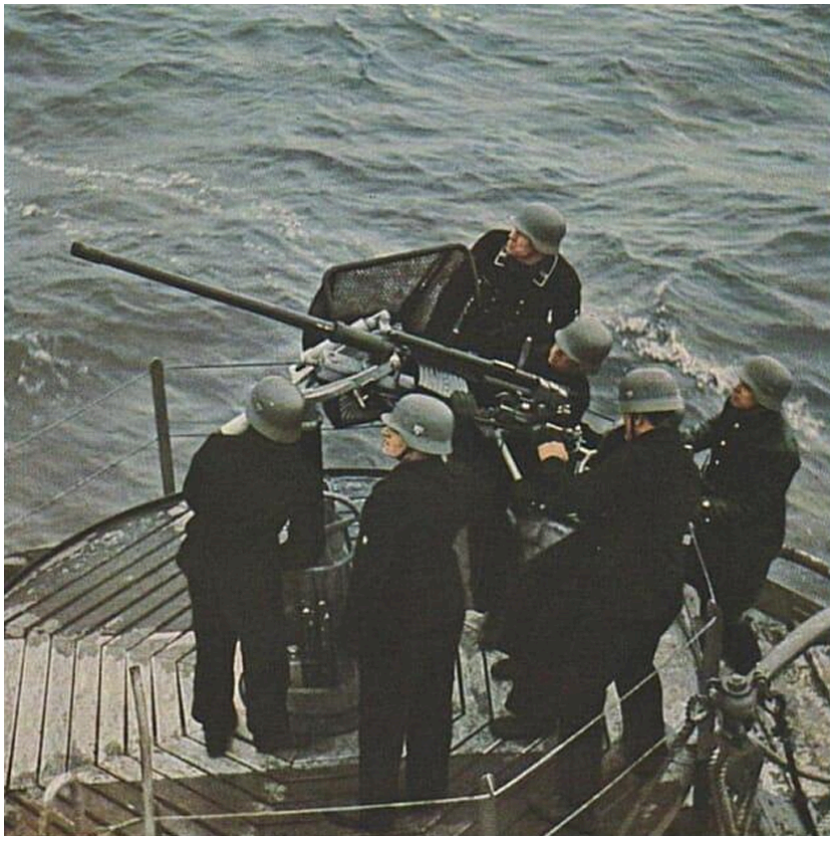
Heavy naval artillery rangefinder - the sky over the sea is constantly scanned for enemy aircraft: the moment a plane appears as a tiny dot on the horizon, the rangefinder is aimed within seconds and the distance is determined; salvo after salvo is then fired at the enemy from every gun in the battery, preventing it from dropping bombs with precision.

Coastal defense by naval artillery - the crew's actions must mesh together as precisely as the gears of a clockwork mechanism if the rate of fire is to reach its maximum speed.

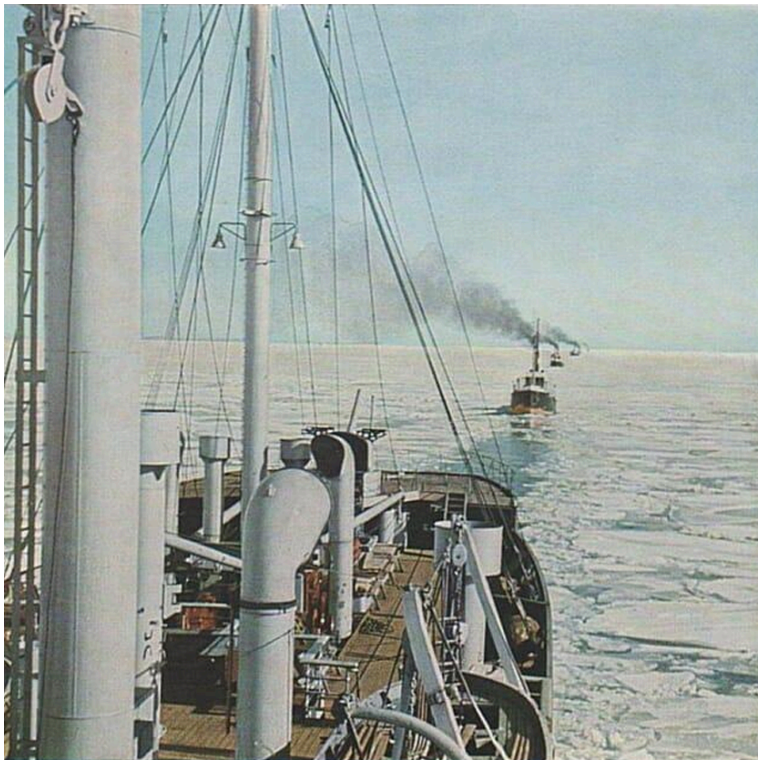
Heavy machine gun in action against enemy aircraft off the coast of Norway - once the German soldier has gained a foothold, he defends it tenaciously and fiercely.



German anti-aircraft guns in Norway's valleys.
Defending against enemy aircraft—that remains the primary mission of anti-aircraft artillery - however, during the campaigns of this war, anti-aircraft guns have often been deployed in ground combat as well; their accuracy and firepower in direct fire have taken out many ground targets and enemy tanks.



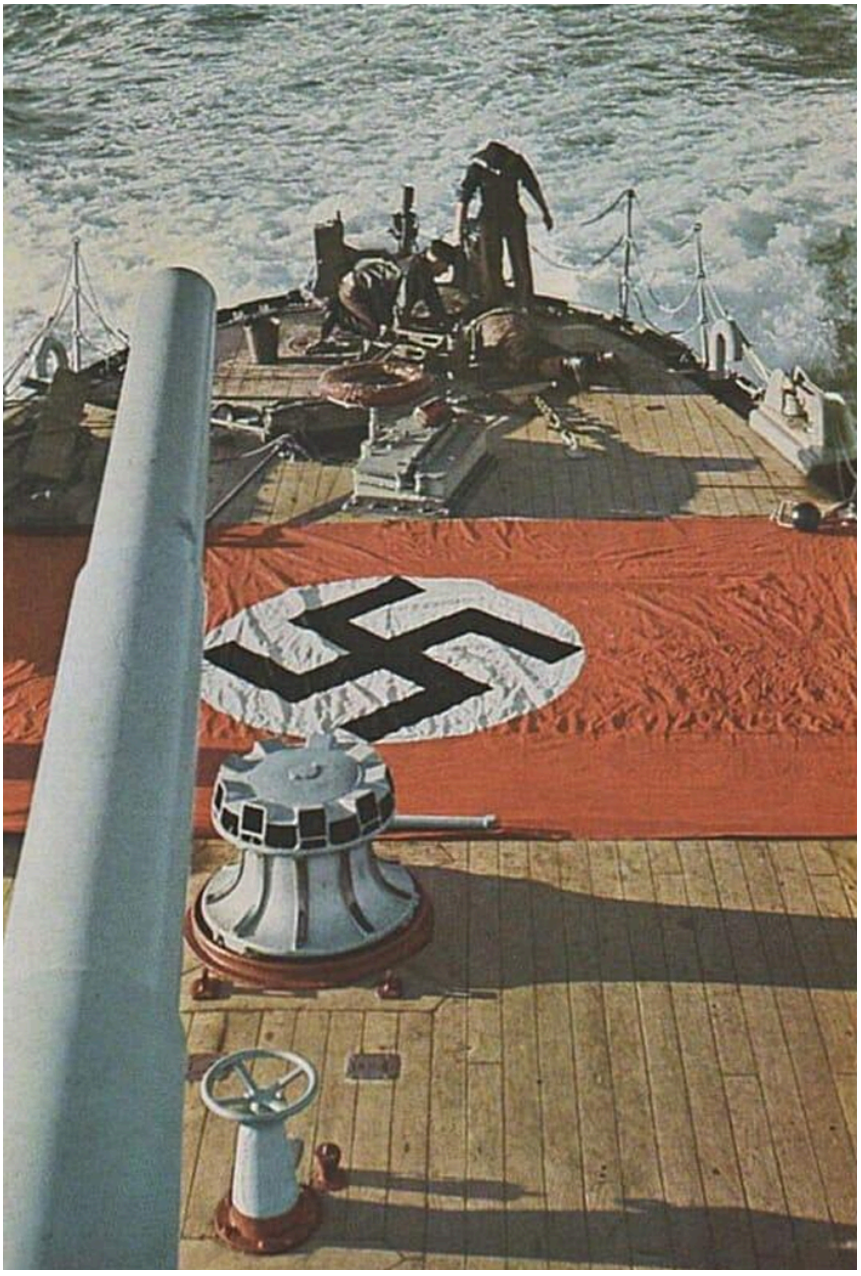
Alarm! — an English plane has been spotted by a German patrol boat, but before it can dive to attack, it is met by a barrage of fire from the light anti-aircraft guns.
Many an English pilot has paid for his attack with his life - the German patrol boats are on the lookout.



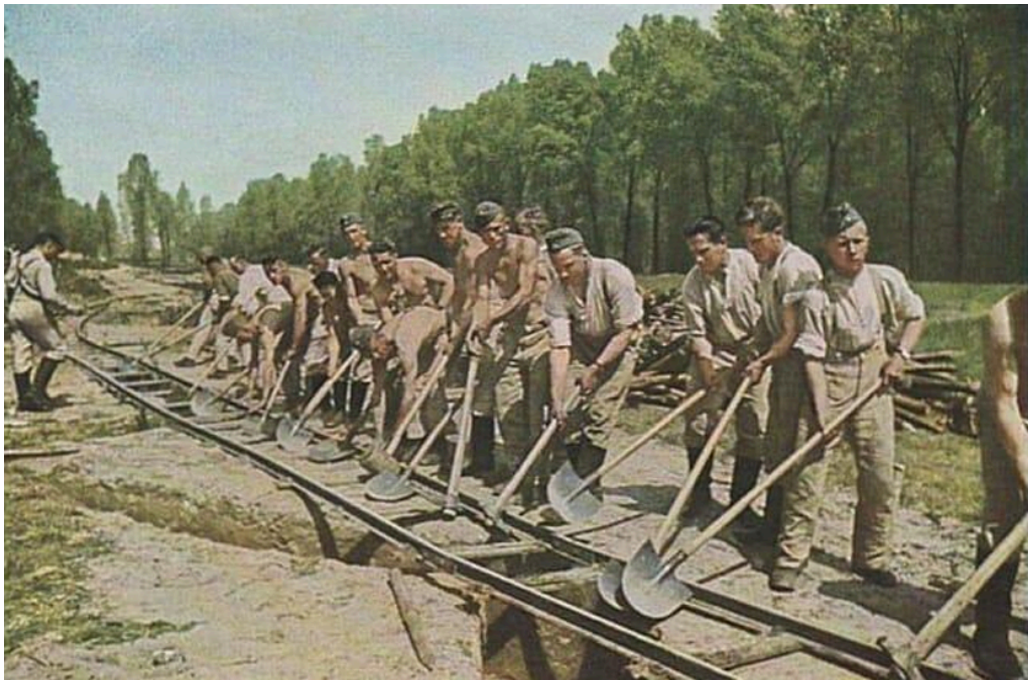
Transport fleet en route to Norway - England's "sea-dominating fleet" has been unable to prevent the daring landing of German troops in Norway or to halt supplies by sea.
Under the protection of the Luftwaffe and the Kriegsmarine, countless transport ships have traversed the Kattegat, the Skagerrak, and the North Sea in both winter and summer; England's fleet has never again dared to seriously threaten these routes after His Majesty's Norway campaign cost him numerous ships.

German M-boats are returning home.
Their service is arduous and perilous - in the North Sea, the English Channel, and the Bay of Biscay, they safeguard the operations of the German Navy against British mines.

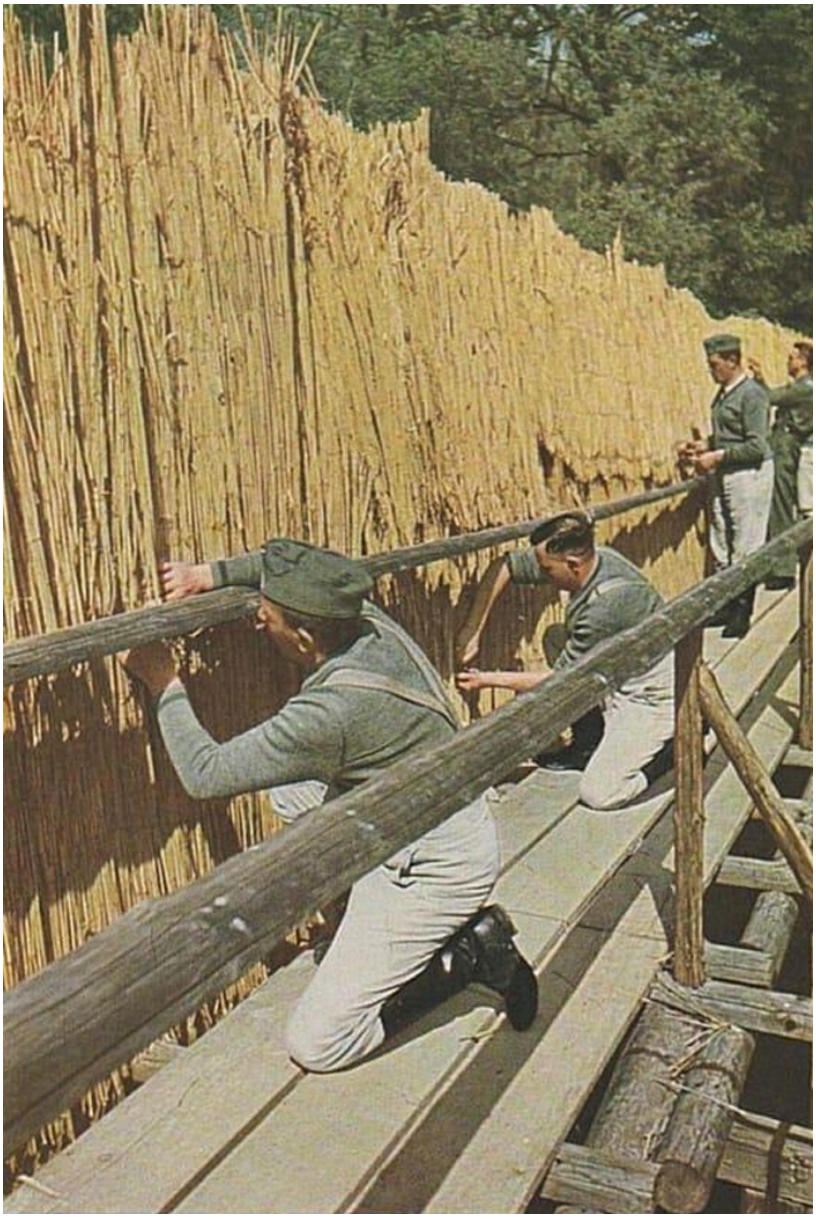
A German destroyer off the coast of Norway - the heroic battle fought by Commodore Bonte and his destroyers off Narvik will forever remain a glorious chapter in the history of the Norwegian Campaign.



The aft deck of a light cruiser at full speed - at the outbreak of war, the German naval forces took the offensive against a vastly superior enemy; deployed to defend German waters and disrupt trade overseas, the German Kriegsmarine has demonstrated an unparalleled fighting spirit, and has earned Germany's right to be a major naval power on the world stage.



Following a brilliant plan, Chief Construction Inspector Dr. Todt built the Westwall for the protection of the Reich on the Führer's orders.
Engineering companies of the armed forces, transport convoys of the NSKK, and hundreds of thousands of German workers in the occupied territories worked day and night for months on this gigantic project: they all did their part to ensure that the horrors of war would not reach German soil.



Engineers shielding a workstation with a barrier.
Many of the Westwall's fortifications were built within the enemy's line of sight, within range of their guns, and the enemy often laid down suppressive fire on them - not only soldiers of the German Wehrmacht, but also men from the Organization Todt, the Labor Service, the NSKK, and conscripted laborers paid the ultimate price during the construction of the Westwall.

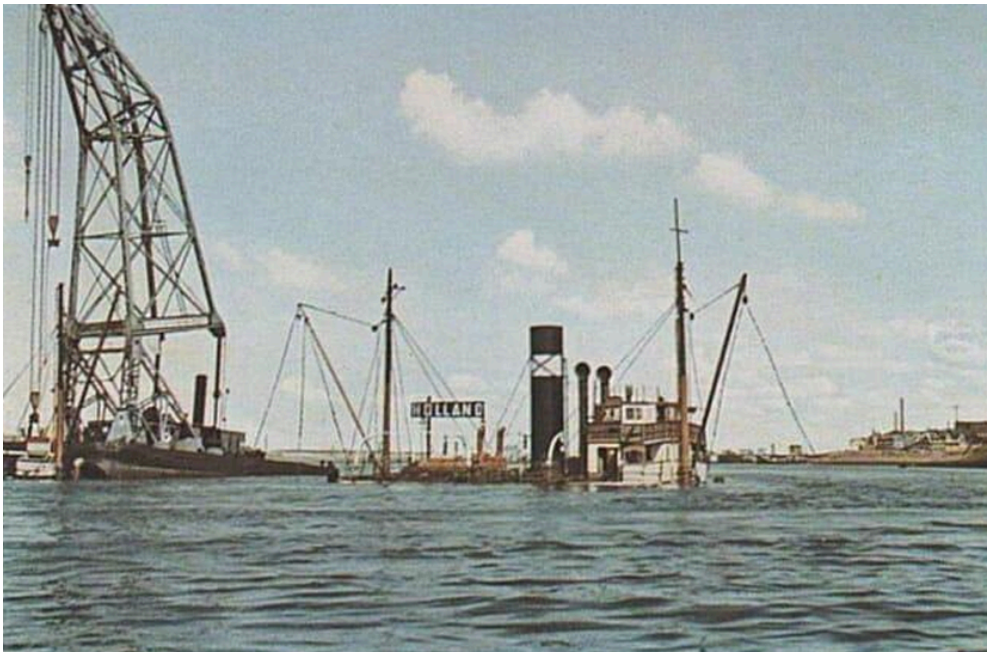
Spewing jets of fire, the flamethrower sweeps through the enemy trenches - in close combat and during assaults on heavily fortified positions, the flamethrower is a fearsome weapon in the hands of assault engineers; countless bunkers along the Maginot Line were destroyed by its use.

With bayonets fixed, they storm the enemy trenches - no one can withstand the force of the German infantry assault.
Here, in the face of the enemy, the relentlessly rigorous training of the military training area proves its worth: every command, every movement has become second nature to each soldier - nothing can stop the German soldiers' march to victory.

Sturmpionieres **on the attack - thick black smoke from the last artillery barrage is still billowing over the enemy trenches when the assault squad already charges forward with hand grenades and fixed bayonets; in fierce combat, they drive back the enemy, obeying orders and heedless of death, which reaps its harvest left and right.**

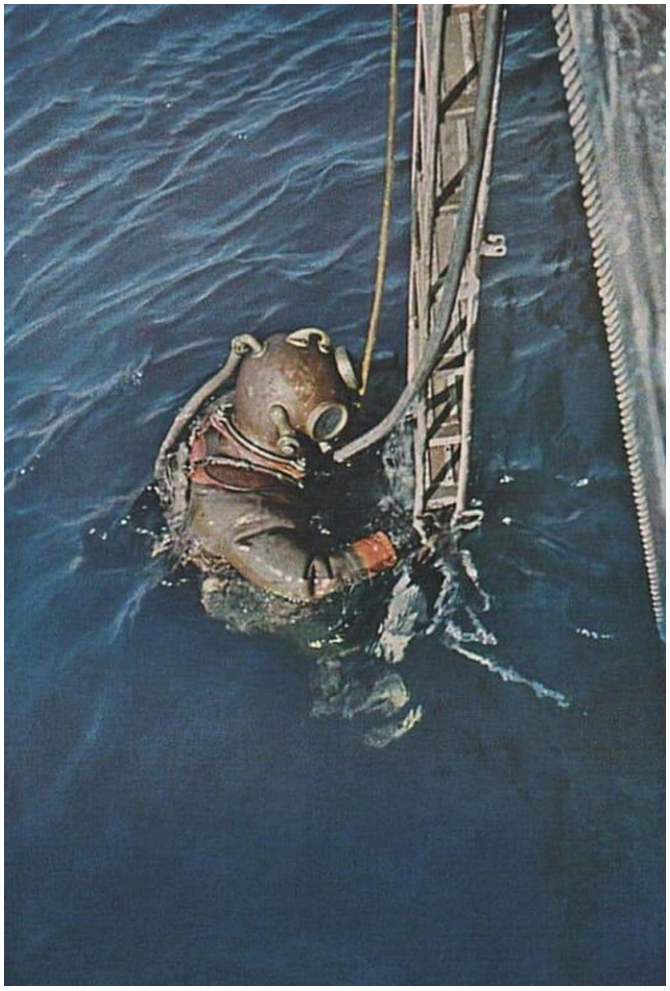
German soldiers from the signals unit at a radio.
Modern mobile warfare requires the seamless operation of all communications systems; the constant contact between higher headquarters and the fighting troops on the German side, and the confusion in the enemy's rear communications in Poland, France, Serbia, and Russia, contributed equally to victory and defeat in these campaigns.
The German signal corps were prepared for large-scale, expansive operations through excellent training.

Laying a light field cable - German troops often covered fifty kilometers or more each day during their advances.
The staff must be kept fully informed of these movements of the fighting forces if they are not to lose control - for this reason, radio and wire communications are established with the rear even during combat; while the enemy's army commands in the west, south, and east sometimes lacked any overview of operations at the front, the German High Command never lost control thanks to its outstanding signal corps.

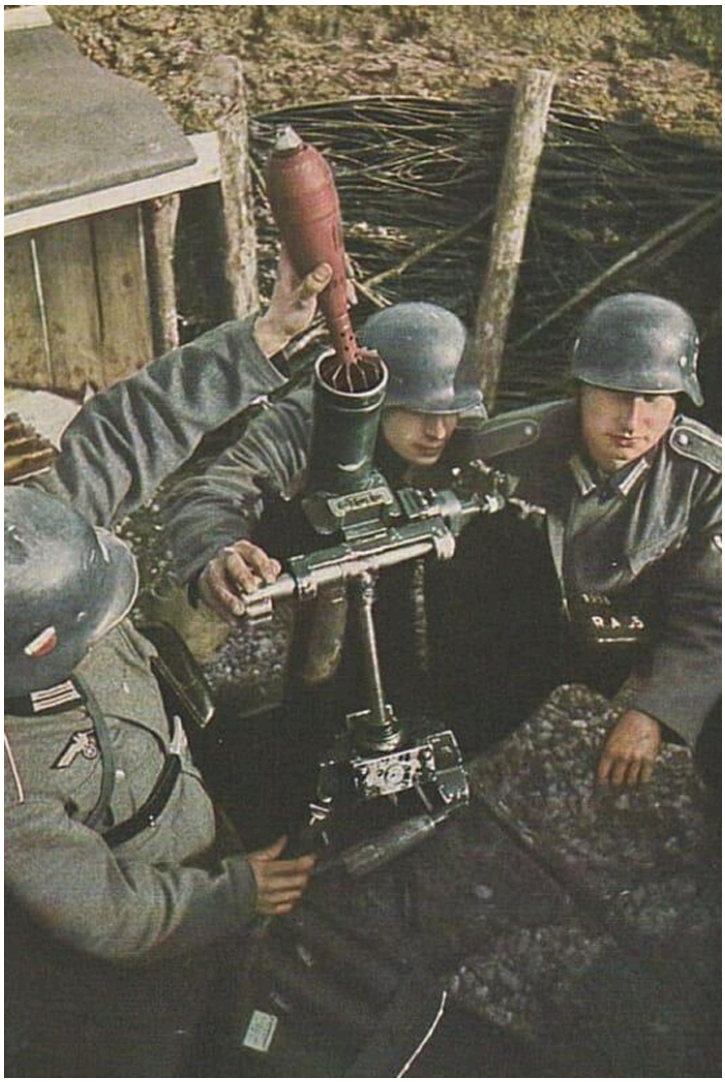


Ship graveyards are all the ports from which the British fled the continent after being defeated by the might of the German Wehrmacht - just when they thought they were safe on their ships, the Stukas swooped down on them.

The mouths of the Scheldt and the Rhine, the ports from Brest to Rotterdam, and those in Greece and Crete have become the graveyards of the British transport fleet.



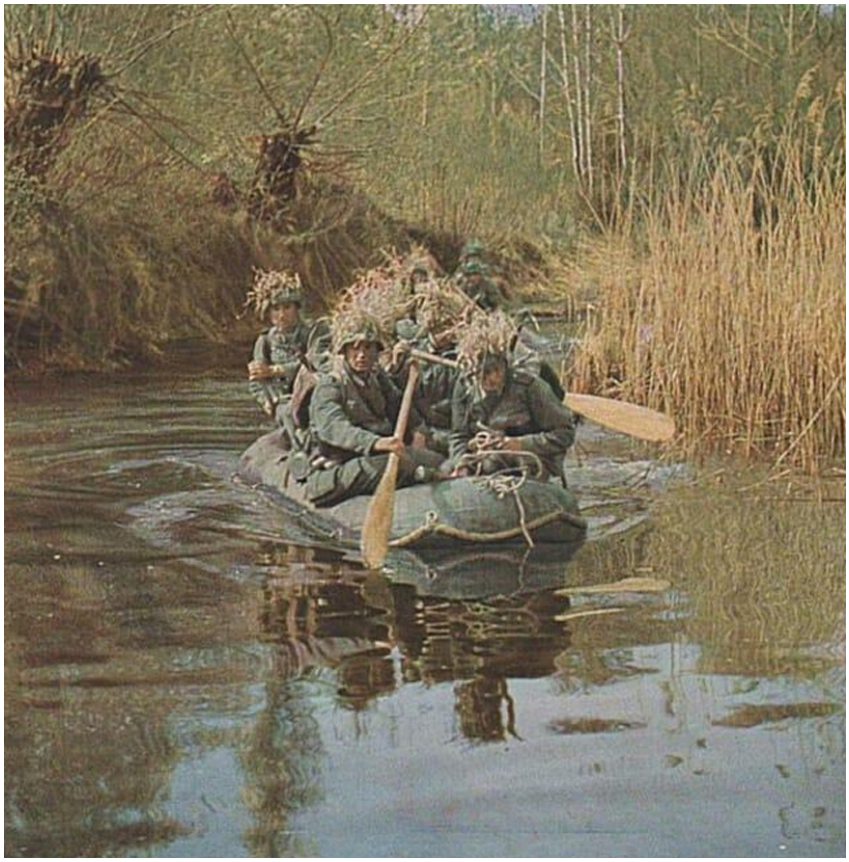
In the ports along the Atlantic coast, and at the mouths of its rivers and streams, countless British ships were captured and destroyed; their wrecks obstruct and endanger navigation, but the German Kriegsmarine needs these ports as bases - therefore, it clears the wrecks and salvages valuable materials.
Divers provide indispensable assistance in this work, tirelessly engaged in difficult and dangerous tasks.



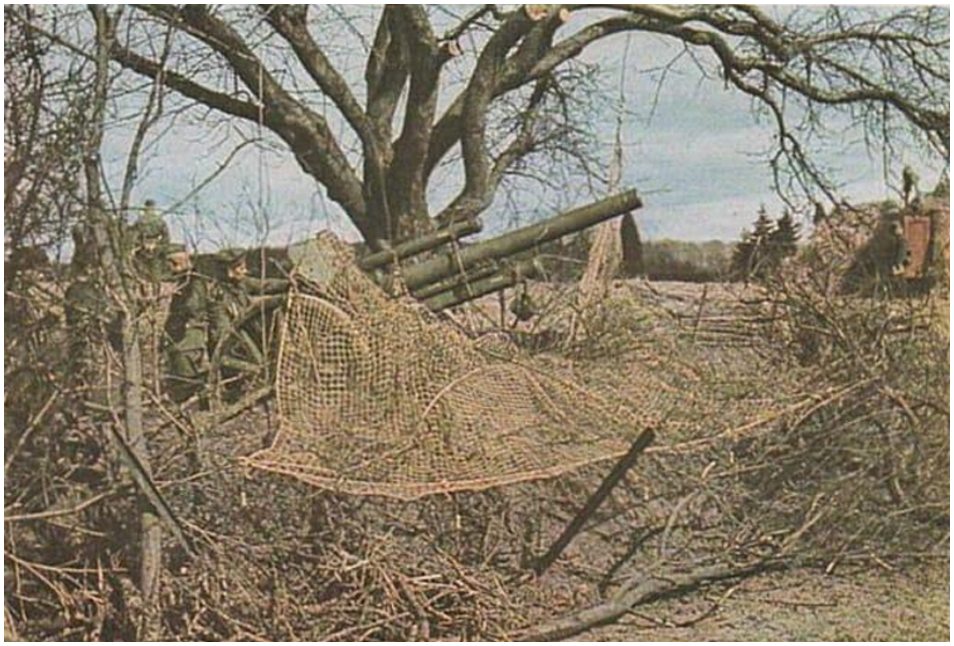
Mortar in action - before the assault begins, the heavily fortified enemy position is pounded into submission, since avoiding heavy casualties is one of the fundamental principles of Adolf Hitler's warfare. Among heavy infantry weapons, the mortar has proven its worth to this day.

A light machine gun and a hand grenade—these are the weapons the assault squad uses to hold off even overwhelming enemy forces; it is in such moments of extreme distress and danger that the camaraderie of the front lines is most strongly felt.

Get ready to fire! — hidden in the dense cover of the undergrowth, the machine gun squad lies in wait for the enemy; with his eye to the sight, the machine gunner holds off the burst of fire...
10 meters, then 5 meters — round after round will leave the barrel, nipping the enemy's attacks in the bud.

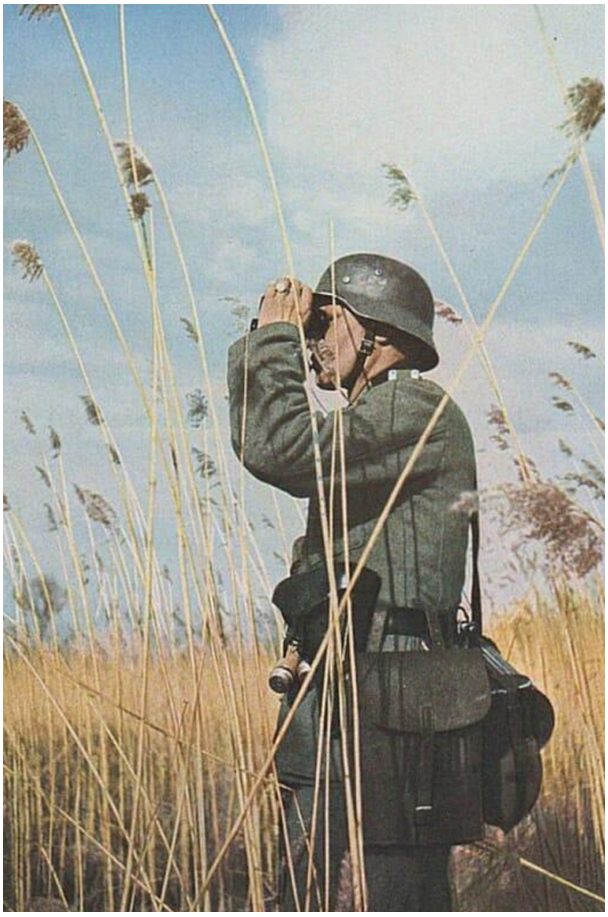


The time has come! — camouflaged in the dense vegetation of the riverbank, the *Sturmpioniere* waited for the order to attack; in rubber boats—or in storm boats on larger, more turbulent waters—they forced their way across the river under the cover of supporting fire.
How could the Albert Canal, the Meuse, the Upper Rhine, the Bug, and the San have been crossed without the efforts of the engineers and their weapons?



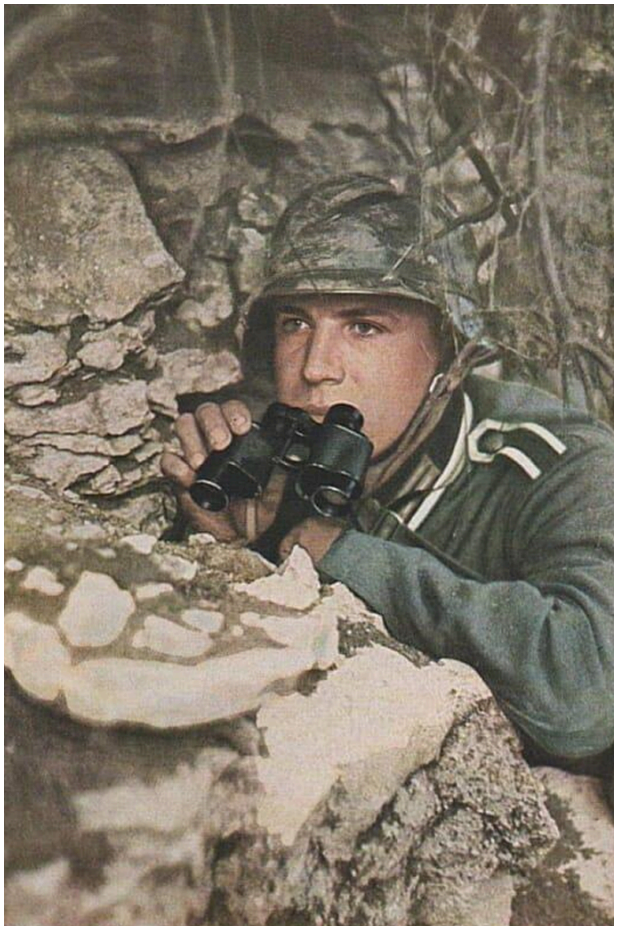
Field gun in firing position, camouflaged against aerial observation - artillery usually plays a decisive role in the often surprisingly rapid defeat of strong enemy fortifications; the enemy's tactics have never been able to cope with the exemplary coordination of the various branches of the German Wehrmacht or their combined operations.

A rest in the Wiesental - although the engine of this war is undoubtedly the machine, the horse remains the German soldier's faithful companion, just as it has been in previous wars.
Commanders in both the East and the West have demanded tremendous feats of endurance from both horse and rider - when a brief rest is ordered during grueling marches, the riders' first concern is for their horses.



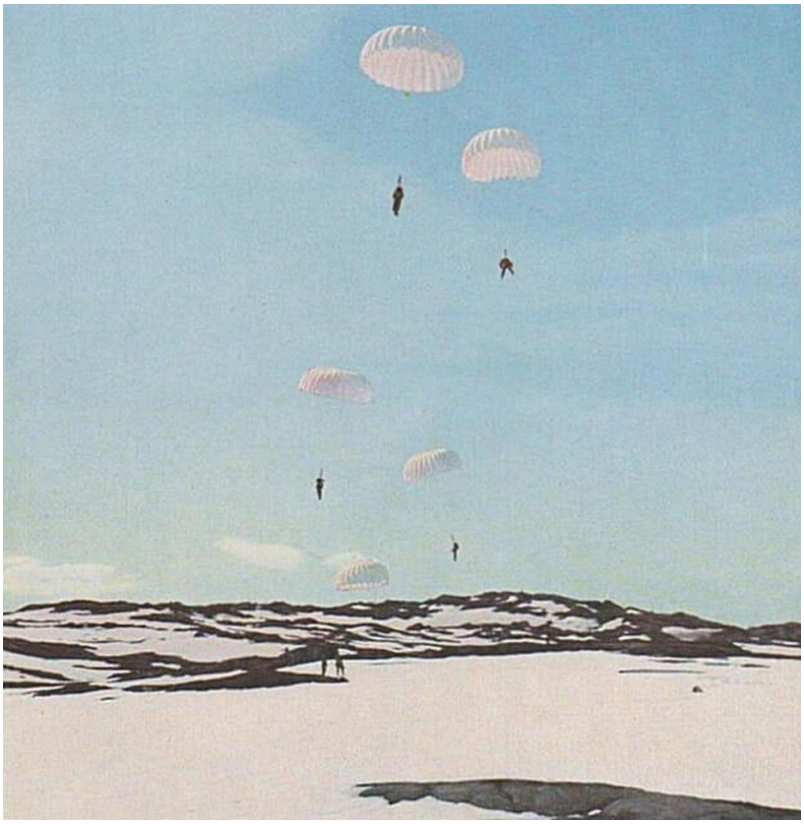
The forward post - from the cover of the swaying reeds, the enemy's movements are closely monitored; the staffs base their decisions on reports from the front lines and plan their operations accordingly.

Artillery observers on the Westwall - in the spring of 1940, the German attacking forces gather amid blossoming trees and flowering meadows; when the moment of the attack arrives, precise knowledge of the enemy's positions is essential for destroying the enemy bunkers and batteries.

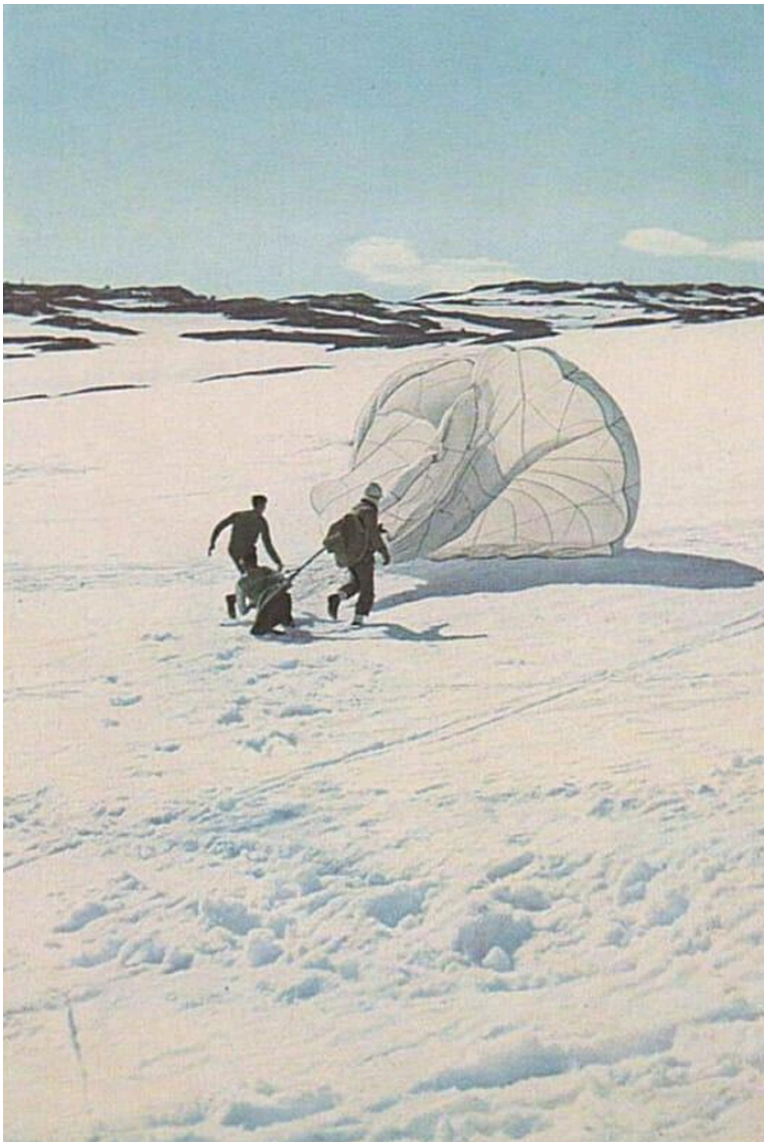


Scout leader - he has the enemy firmly in his sights, and every nerve is on edge: with iron determination, he pursues his objective.
Always leading the way ahead of his comrades, he forces his way through to reconnoiter the enemy position.

In the peaceful land of defeated bunkers—a scene characteristic of the Western theater of war.
On the roads where the army marched, the war left its mark: at bridges, at intersections - the fighting raged at fortifications of every kind.
Here, the war revealed all its horrors - even today, devastation and destruction speak a cruelly clear language there, but a hundred meters further on, fields and meadows breathe the deepest peace.



***Gebirgsjägers* land near Narvik - their daring drop and their heroic, months-long defense of the seemingly lost outpost in the far north under the command of General Diell of the Mountain Troops are, as the Führer said, among the boldest feats in the history of warfare.**

 .

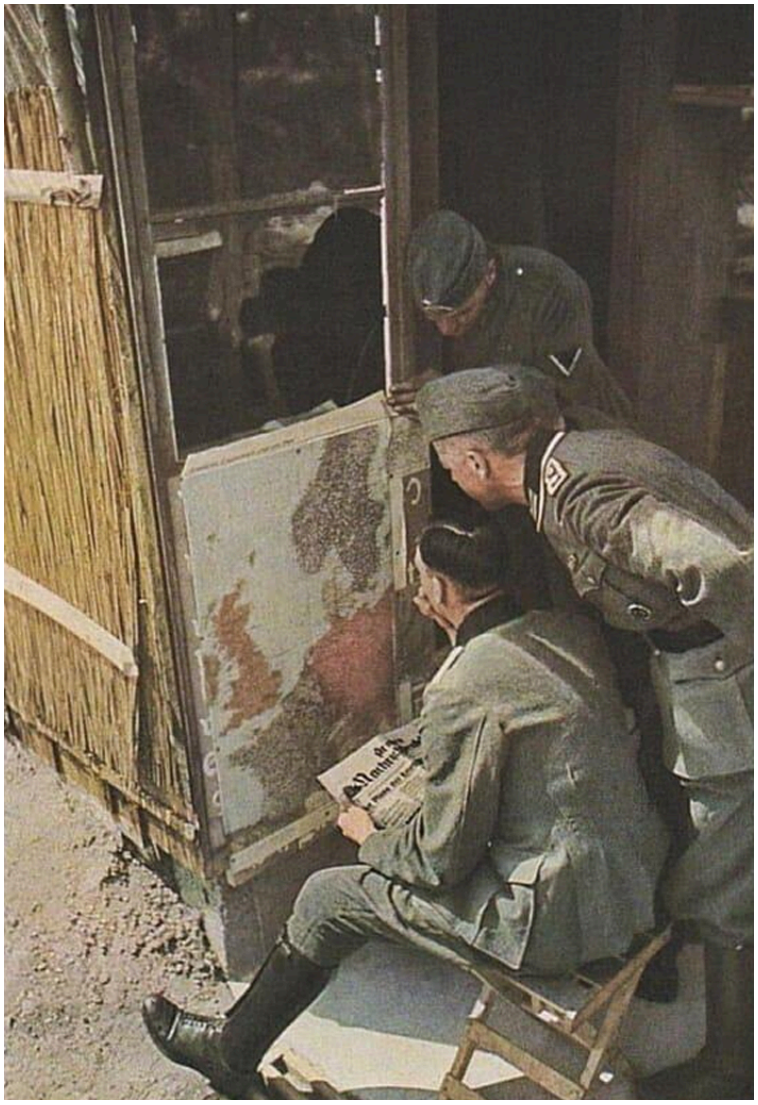
A successful landing!
Comrades rush to free the paratrooper from his wind-swollen parachute; their first thoughts after the successful landing turn to the weapons dropped nearby, and once in possession of them, the paratroopers tenaciously and fiercely defend the key position entrusted to them.
Narvik and Crete, Eben Emael and Corinth are glorious chapters in the heroic struggle of the German *Fallschirmjäger*.

Ruinous farmsteads and villages reduced to rubble mark the path of the English war on the continent. Wherever possible, German soldiers put a stop to the worst of the destruction - valuable property and numerous works of art owe their survival today solely to the self-sacrificing efforts of German troops.

PK cameramen at work.

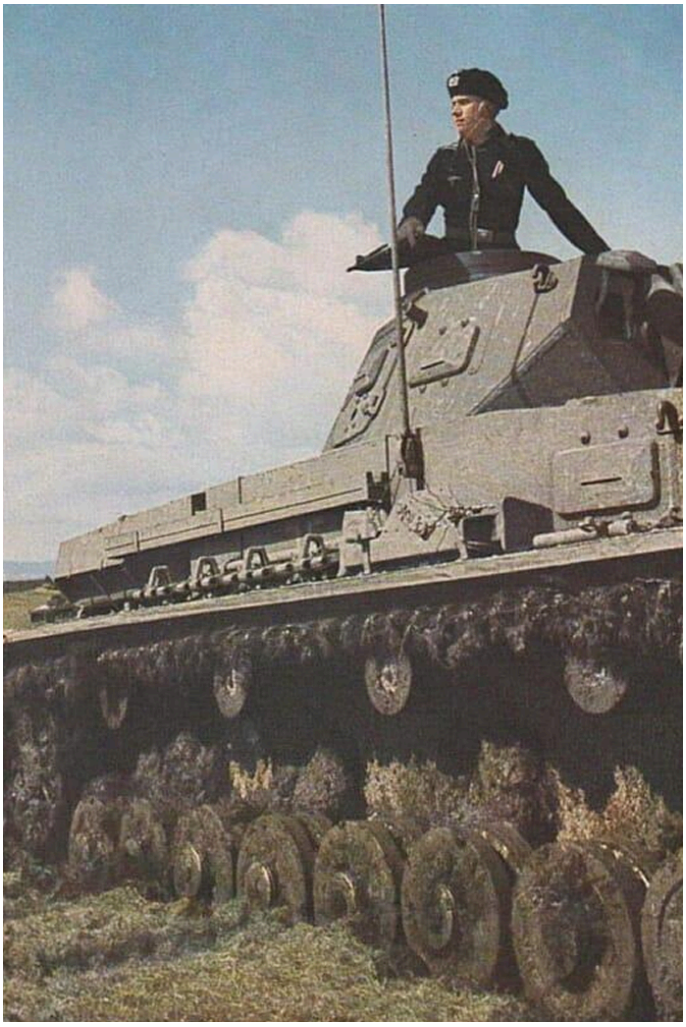
He is filming what appears to be a peaceful landscape - and yet, time and again, the men of the PK—the reporters, photojournalists, and filmmakers, the illustrators and radio announcers of the propaganda companies—have proven that they are soldiers in the truest sense of the word.

Risking their lives and suffering significant losses, always at the forefront with the fighting troops, the propaganda companies reported the heroic struggle at the front to the homeland in words and images.



“The High Command of the Wehrmacht announces...” - these sober words, the daily opening to the detailed reports on the course of military operations, captivate both the home front and the front lines every time. The whole world, even the enemy, knows that the OKW reports, dated from the Führer’s headquarters during times of major military events, are not to be twisted or misinterpreted - with feverish interest, the soldiers in the rear follow the advance of their comrades in arms.

Bed rest abord a hospital ship - on the road to recovery!
Under the watchful care of the German Red Cross and the attentive supervision of “Kraft durch Freude,” German soldiers are recuperating - the homeland is doing everything it can to restore the health of those who risked their lives and shed their blood at the front.



“The Commander" - it was not merely the superiority of their weapons that led the National Socialist armies from victory to victory, for they would have been nothing but lifeless metal had it not been for the intelligence of the German people behind them: where is the enemy who can command his sophisticated weapon as masterfully as this commander commands his Panzer?